

# 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 \***

Mindy Albrecht-Benson

**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 grew up in Lanesboro and am a graduate of Lanesboro High School. After earning a B.S. degree in Applied Mathematics, from UW-Stout I lived and worked in the Twin Cities area, returning to Lanesboro regularly to visit family. I returned to Lanesboro as a permanent resident in 2018 and now work remotely. I have served the community as a city council member for the past 4 years. I am excited to potentially serve the community in the role of mayor because I think I bring a unique perspective as someone who was raised here and also relocated here after living elsewhere. My main goals are to ensure that the city is able to continue to provide existing services to residents well into the future and be forward thinking to anticipate future needs.

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**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 as I see it is to partner with the city administrator and other city council members to review input from commission boards (when provided/appropriate) and to focus on facts to set priorities and make decisions. I see myself approaching the mayoral responsibilities as I have approached my role on council - listening to all points of view, discerning facts from emotion, looking at options and asking questions where necessary.

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**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)*

Funding and logistics around the Highway 250 project. Having an updated and actionable comprehensive plan with a vision for the future. Creative ways to lighten the tax burden on residents.

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**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 and the people who live, work and visit here are a unique mix. Full-time vs part-time residents. Seasonal vs year round business activity. Agriculture, tourism and the arts. Often times conflicting priorities and points of view. It's all about listening to each other, sometimes making compromises and keeping the greater good in mind.

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**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 Highway 250 project will definitely be a challenge. I think that it will need to be a partnership not only with the city but also with the DOT and our city engineers to find creative ways for businesses to remain accessible. I believe the city can help a lot with signage and communication as well as gathering ideas. We have a lot of creative thinkers in this community and am confident that working together we can come up with innovative solutions to this temporary (but necessary) construction. I would also be interested in what creative solutions we can leverage from other cities who have taken on similar projects.

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**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)*

I see council taking its direction from our city administrator who will be heavily involved in coordination amongst these entities. I think we have a responsibility to differentiate “needs” from “nice to haves” when it comes to the final project design and cost, to keep the project costs within budget and to anticipate and communicate around impacts and plans to address those impacts.

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**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)*

It is unlikely this will be a relevant topic once those up for election take office. I feel the library board’s focus should be on library patrons and the services wanted by and provided to those patrons. The financial commitment to the library and support for their services from the city should remain the same. The library employees should be required to follow city policies. The library board should advise the city council to help them make informed decisions and should function like all other city boards/commissions.

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**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)*

I would first have a conversation with the experts on the issue (city administrator, city engineer, etc). I would ask questions until I understand the issue and then would work to understand the potential options available to solve the issue. I would get input from the other council members, any involved advisory boards, residents and business owners. Then I would encourage the council to weigh the pros and cons of each option considering the major stakeholders (residents, business owners, visitors, etc) and land on what we think is the best option for addressing the issue.

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

*(2,500 character response limit)*

Lanesboro's history is huge part of its charm and it's important we continue to do what we can to preserve it while striving to find and keep the right balance between new and old.

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**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)*

Lanesboro is a fantastic place to raise a family. Our school is one our greatest assets. I think having our business community focus on businesses that provide things for full-time residents would go a long way towards attracting full-time families. I also think that our housing prices have been driven up by people who don't live here full-time and our tax burden needs to be lessened. More affordable housing would help attract families to town.

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**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)*

One of the biggest challenges for small communities is the baseline cost for operating a city and the fact that the cost needs to be spread amongst the property and business owners. I think Lanesboro is relatively expensive for a small town. I think that whatever we can do to bring more residents and resident-focused businesses to town will help to increase affordability for everyone

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**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)*

Compared to when I was growing up here, I would like to see Lanesboro come together more as a community. There are many different people who want different things from Lanesboro. How do we meet everyone's needs? Some people view Lanesboro as a nice weekend getaway. Some people view it as a relaxing place to retire. Some view it as a great place to raise a family. Some view it as a place to be creative. These groups are largely separate from each other. I would like to see the city with an actionable comprehensive plan that takes all of these needs into account and incorporates ideas from each group into its vision. I would like to see the city being more proactive than reactive when it comes to the direction this town is moving.

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

*(2,500 character response limit)*

Our business owners know their needs and priorities best. The city needs to solicit input from business owners as ordinances and policies are being considered, listen to that input and keep business owners in mind as decisions are made.

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**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)*

Residents and business owners are always welcome to reach out to city officials and I strive to be someone who is approachable. Contact information is on the city website. Residents and business owners are also welcome to attend all public meetings and offer comments. I would love to see more of a dialogue between residents, business owners and the city as well as the city more actively soliciting input. This could take the format of surveys, town halls, etc. One of my main goals is that we continue to build a community that meets everyone's needs and desires.

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**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)*

I have been very active in the community after relocating back to Lanesboro 6 years ago. Besides being a council member as well as a member of the Heritage Preservation Commission and Library boards, I have been the council liaison to the Lanesboro Public Utilities commission for the past 4 years. Outside of city responsibilities, I am currently a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. I officiate high school volleyball and help with senior dining/meals on wheels. I strive to be an approachable, fact-based decision maker and would encourage anyone to reach out to me for a conversation where you can share any ideas or concerns you have about city operations and the future of Lanesboro.

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

Google Forms