

Indivisible Benton County — Candidate Questionnaire November 2026 Midterm Election

Thank you for your interest in an endorsement from Indivisible Benton County. **Please complete this questionnaire and return it to voter@indivisiblebc.org by Aug. 12.** Responses will be reviewed by our candidate research committee, and excerpts may be shared with our members.

Please do not use generative AI (artificial intelligence) when completing this questionnaire. We would much rather see grammatical errors in answers that reflect you personally than perfect writing that doesn't originate from your own thoughts!

Please reach out to voter@indivisiblebc.org if you have any questions about the questionnaire or our endorsement process.

SECTION 1: CANDIDATE & CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

1. Full name: *Carolyn Mayers*
2. Office sought: *Corvallis City Council, Ward 8 seat*
3. Campaign website and social media accounts (if applicable):

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

4. Why are you running for this office? What do you hope to accomplish if elected? *I am running for re-election for this seat because 2 short years is just barely enough time to gain enough knowledge and perspective to govern effectively and make good, well-informed decisions for the community. We face major challenges and need experienced leaders focused on issues that directly affect our local Corvallis residents. I am now equipped to fill that leadership role, and welcome the opportunity to help guide us. As far as what we should accomplish for the city and community (I say "we" because there isn't a lot of "I" on a City Council if it is functioning as it should), Our top priority has to be working strategically through all of the decisions that will ultimately lead to our city being in a better place from a fiscal perspective, and, therefore, a better, more affordable place to live. We are in a precarious place at the moment and need to focus on that from which everything else flows - how do we position ourselves to ensure short and long term fiscal stability so we can continue to provide the services the community needs and wants without constantly placing an increasingly large burden on them? Answering that question and then putting those pieces in place is paramount. In terms of accomplishment -
Setting us on a path to fiscal stability
Secondarily but also relatedly, one of my top priorities is and has been ever since I even thought about serving is to establish some form of Civic Leadership Academy in*

Corvallis. Whether we do it in house, or hire it out (there are a couple of great programs out there!), the prospect of our future Councilors serving 4 year terms necessitates us “building a bench” so future candidates can hit the ground running and Council can be more effective earlier in new Councilor’s terms. The two year terms are a major handicap to consistent progress on our long-term issues, and it is my fervent desire that we can capitalize fully on that change (hopefully!) by ensuring we are equipping future leaders adequately rather than hoping for the best. The latter has not served us well. So, getting the ballot measure passed this November would be a very major accomplishment and one to which I will be devoting myself for the rest of this, my first term. If it passes, preparing to fully capitalize on that gain is a priority.

5. Describe how your prior experiences (such as public service, community organizing, professional expertise, volunteer work, schooling, family responsibilities, etc.) have contributed to the knowledge and skills you will use as a city councilor.

Aside from the almost 2 years I have served on Council, having served as Vice-Chair for the Corvallis Planning Commission was the most directly relevant experience I have had. Serving on a board or Commission prior to serving on Council definitely gives you a leg up on how things work. Beyond that, my previous service as an advisor to the Board of CMLC and volunteer Conversation Partner; my past service on other non-profit Boards and in a WIDE variety of other non-profit volunteer positions all contribute perspective to how I work to serve our community. One experience of which I am most proud is my role as founding co-leader of a chapter of the national non-profit Dining for Women (now called Together Women Rise). We built a community, educated members about poverty and oppression of women and children in the developing world, and raised significant funds. I was also heavily involved in organization leadership, strategic planning and fundraising. During my stint the organization grew from 38 chapters, to over 200 over 5 years.

My current role as a founding member of the Steering Committee for our local Braver Angels Alliance and the principles we promote centered around civil discourse and depolarizing are also critically important in these extremely divisive times. This work helps me with honoring all perspectives, and listening carefully and respectfully to those with whom I disagree. Serving currently as the Council Liaison to the Corvallis Chamber, and Corvallis Benton County Economic Development Coalition, and informally collaborating with Visit Corvallis, the Downtown Corvallis Organization, and my previous experience both in the insurance industry and as owner/operator of an organic farm, I feel I offer a perspective to Council that is helpful in the economic development realm. This is one critical area of focus in our upcoming work to help ensure future fiscal stability. I

In addition I work closely with developers to explore issues they experience working with the city so we may address barriers and delays to housing and commercial development, and periodically attend meetings of the Corvallis League of Women Voters’ Housing Committee meetings to keep up to date on their work. I am a member of the Community Planning Committee of the League as well. I work as a volunteer for the Oregon League of Women Voters, monitoring and reporting on wildfire and related legislation, filing weekly reports throughout the Legislative Session. And I have recently

been appointed to a future role on the 2027 General Governance Policy Committee for the League of Oregon Cities. This is long enough but there is a lot more.

In summary, I feel strongly I have the experience to fill a much needed leadership role for the incoming Council which will have almost all new members.

SECTION 3: ACCESSIBILITY, TRANSPARENCY, & ACCOUNTABILITY

6. How can the City Council and Mayor ensure that the Corvallis city government is transparent, accessible, and accountable to all constituents, especially *historically underrepresented voices*?

Thank you for asking this question. I have been pushing Council to update the charge of our JEDI Advisory Board (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) for the past 6-8+ months after some of our actions last year resulted in marginalization of some members of our community. It was avoidable, and we can do better. I believe we will be discussing this later in August at a Work Session - not positive about that. I also feel focusing on this area in a more intentional way will make Corvallis a more ACTUALLY inclusive community, as opposed to selcetively inclusive which sometimes seems to be the case.

In addition, I feel Council needs to do a much better job of being out in the community for conversations and holding small group discussions - I am in the process of planning this out for myself, but I feel the entire Council should be provided better support in this area by the city. We need to get outside our comfort zones. Communication and community engagement are things most municipalities struggle with and is a particualr area of interest of mine. One of our main duties is to LISTEN to our constituents and it is hard to do that if you aren't present. We need to figure out the best ways to make that happen in a manner that is not always how WE feel is easy, but how the community can more easily participate.

I have to add my two cents on the responsibility of community members to engage. I often say to people who don't engage with the city, "Democracy is a participation sport. If you aren't participating, you can't expect anything to change." This statement usually follows some or another lamentation about something the city has done, or hasn't done. I will always ask - have you reached out to your City Councilor, or Council as a whole? (I speak to anyone, and try and help anyone - regardless of their Ward, BTW) Change starts at the local level.

In addition, if you are running for Mayor: How will you ensure that advisory boards, commissions, and committees are representative of Corvallis' population, range of experiences, and perspectives? NOT RUNNING FOR MAYOR BUT SEE BELOW- See my repsonse above re JEDI - COUNCIL can direct this. I am working on it. In fact, here is a detail for you - the Mayor appoints members of Boards and Commission as you seem to already know. But did you know that it is with "the advice and consent of Council"? These appointments are placed on the Consent Agenda, and the applications are NOT shared with Council. To me that means Council is consenting without advising. In order to have checks and balances on this process, I feel, and am working on, having the applications for the positions we are being asked to approve provided in the packet in advance of approval, so Council actually has an opportunity to "advise" on these

positions. I think this would serve to help expand the variety of perspectives on these bodies.

7. How will you approach working with people, both on the Council and in the community, with different political views, personal experiences, or approaches to decision-making than you? If possible, provide an example of a time (at a job or school, or within a community, political, non-profit, or other organization) when you disagreed with someone yet worked together towards a solution.

This is a core principle of how I am, and how I approach interactions with everyone but especially those with whom I disagree. I have already mentioned this in previous answers above, vis a vis Braver Angels. Also, I went to school with the intention of becoming a foreign diplomat, so peacemaking runs deep in my soul.

You may find it of interest to know that I have had conversations with a couple of your members on this very topic and our approaches are quite different. Pam F., and Esther K. In fact, I think I am remiss in following up with Esther in sending her our Web link. She had asked me to keep her in the loop when we got things up and running last year, and I completely forgot about it. I will follow up with her, but it'd be great if you could also share the link I gave you with her as well (in case I forget AGAIN!)

I have multiple examples...I meet with a former City Councilor monthly with whom I vehemently disagree on at least 50% of what we discuss. But we have developed a respectful dialog because we both care more about our wonderful community than always having to prove one or the other is "right". And this will not be your favorite thing, for sure, but I also interact with all manner of community members with whom I have virtually nothing in common, or even agree on when it comes to policy, sometimes intentionally, especially if I get word of an issue, or they reach out. This includes conservatives and others on the right side of the political spectrum. This speaks directly to the non-partisan nature of our Council which so many seem to have lost - we have MANY members of our community who feel silenced for fear of retribution by the more extreme political factions. I am a moderate/liberal Democrat and I go out of my way to hear other perspectives from those with whom I disagree on ALL sides. We, as elected officials, represent the entire community. So while we may not agree with some peoples' positions, or even their values, they are still fellow human beings and members of our community, and to NOT honor them and hear them is to marginalize them. This doesn't mean I am advocating for their positions - left or right. I just means I recognize that they, too, have challenges, share similar concerns, and that they are not my enemy. And I am sworn to represent everyone. So, I listen and engage.

I also go out of my way to develop open lines of communication with Council members and other elected officials and candidates who have very different approaches and priorities than I do. I have done this consistently since I decided to run for office, meeting several times with candidates from the Sunrise Slate last election, and all of the candidates (save one so far) this election, several more than once. The best policy comes from weighing multiple perspectives with an open mind and that is what I strive for.

SECTION 4: VALUES & PRIORITIES

8. What are the top three issues you would prioritize if elected? What actions/policies can the City implement to address these issues?

Getting our financial and governance house in order as described above

Increasing attention to wildfire mitigation efforts

Finding creative ways to help with the cost of childcare/daycare/pre-school, and more generally and relatedly, helping find ways to address the high cost of living here where we can, realistically

There will, of course, be others, because I can't predict the future and what the needs will be.

9. How would you approach Corvallis' current budget gap while honoring the Corvallis Strategic Plan?¹²³

The long-term solution is a much more complete, cohesive and multi-faceted long term plan. In the meantime there are pieces we can put into place. I would like to help the community understand the problem better so as to help understand why we need to find possible solutions. So, before we propose a solution, I feel we need to make sure the community fully grasps the problem and the magnitude of it.

Examine what part all the levers we can pull play - service/staff reductions, sale of city property, quantify the costs associated with having a vast percentage of tax-exempt property and look at ways to mitigate the negative effect of that reality on our ability to continue the services levels we provide. And a SMALL payroll and/or income tax as part of an overall package is likely to be part of that, but, in my view, significantly less than is currently in discussion. Facilities needs are another issue that will need to be addressed and are another long-term need and challenge. I feel this is a separate issue.

10. How could/should city government address the trickle-down effects of decreased federal spending?

I don't have a magic formula for dealing with this. Unfortunately with our current financial situation, addressing it likely means we have less wiggle room on just too many fronts. Honestly - really can't answer this one with any real substance. We can best address it by being extremely careful in our budgeting and try and manage to worst case scenarios. We have already had to do this to some extent...

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC POLICIES

¹ <https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2026-06-17/corvallis-city-council-still-considering-new-taxes-weighs-other-options>

² https://gazettetimes.com/news/local/government-politics/article_21949038-0be4-5f95-856b-f76dc7b80de1.html

³ <https://www.corvallisoregon.gov/mc/page/strategic-plan>

11. What role do you believe our local government should play in protecting the rights of marginalized or vulnerable community members (e.g., immigrants, LGBTQ+ residents, people of color, people with disabilities)?

Personally I feel the best path is generally, but not in every instance, to default to the very robust protections that Oregon State Law provides. Delving into local Resolutions, which have no material, legally defensible or enforceable effect, is not my preferred method. At a time when we are dealing with a widening budget gap, and a Council that does not excel at using its time efficiently, adding the legal expense and time suck that Resolutions on social issues tend to be is not a direction I favor. Partnering and having much better communications with other institutions and organizations around the city, and, as I mentioned before, strengthening our JEDI Board and making its charge more meaningful and relevant would go a long way toward helping us do this better. I have provided staff with examples from other cities in an effort to improve this in a manner that is more appropriate and likely to yeild better results.

12. What is your position on data center development in the Willamette Valley, including considerations like energy and water use, tax incentives, and community input in the permitting process?

I feel that each case is different, and newer centers are being designed to drastically reduce the effects, especially on water. That said, I view them with suspicion, and don't think they belong anywhere near residences. I am not dead set against them in every single case. If any are proposed for Corvallis, we would have to objectively weigh whether or not the proposed center has more advantages than disadvantages to the community, and not depend on emotional or biased reasoning. That said I understand it is thought the liklihood is low here.

13. Albany recently canceled its contract with Flock for Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs). Proponents of ALPRs, and other forms of mass surveillance technology, focus on public safety benefits such as solving crimes and finding kidnapping victims. Opponents emphasize the potential for, and history of, harms due to errors and misuse of data. What is your position regarding use of ALPR's and/or other forms of mass surveillance by the City? Should the City regulate use of this technology by private residents and companies within city limits?

We don't use any forms of mass surveillance and I am quite certain we would not approve the use of them.

No, I personally do not believe we should regulate the use in private business. I don't think local government should be regulating private businesses in how they can best secure their establishments. Nor do we have the staff for enforcement of such a measure.

14. What role, if any, do you believe local government should play in addressing climate change (e.g., emissions reduction, sustainability planning, enhancing resilience to extreme weather)?

Our city is very focused on this and we have policies that inform every decision we make when it comes to climate and sustainability. I feel our most impactful role is in our city facilities and equipment and what we can do to make them as climate friendly as

possible. We actually have a Sustainability Coordinator. We have already installed solar on most of our buildings where it is feasible. The rooftops in downtown wear reflective white paint (I forget the technical term). I already mentioned wildfire resilience and mitigation. I have an idea for a bill relating to building code and wildfire resilience have begun early discussions on with Senator Gelser-Blouin...Climate resilience and adaptation, in my opinion, should be our primary focus as a city since those affect public safety, which is our number one priority. Always.

15. Based on January 2025 "Point in Time" data, Benton County had a total homeless count of 550, with 244 unsheltered in Corvallis. What is the City doing right to reduce homelessness and/or its impacts on the City? What could the city be doing differently? ⁴
The city's primary role is to increase the housing supply as much and as fast as we possibly can. We have almost 2,000 housing units in the pipeline right now and more coming. Housing of all types. AND we purchased two buildings last year that the County will be running permanent supportive housing out of once we get them renovated and ready. We have supported the financing of Corvallis Housing First - millions of dollars - I don't recall the exact amount. We have also given substantial support to Unity Shelter and to microshelters. These are examples that fit into the City's work. Most of the actual on the ground support for the homeless population is under the purview of the County. They were recently appointed to be the Regional Coordinator. They receive half of our social services funding to help with shelter and support services, and much of the other half also goes toward homeless support. I do not believe the city has the capacity or funds to do more, and may well have to do less unless we can get some relief from our fiscal woes. That said, one priority of mine is to do whatever we can to help KEEP people housed who are on the edge. It is significantly less costly to keep people, especially families, IN their homes than to help them find housing once they become homeless.

Finally, funding for shelter services coming from the State are predicted to be reduced by 50% with the next State Budget, so any real impact is going to need to be lobbying our State Legislators. Between this, and the reductions in Federal support and new requirements for SNAP and other changes, the State is going to need to prioritize this.

16. Corvallis voters will be deciding on reforms to the City Council in November. Do you support or oppose these reforms, and why? ⁵

I am 1000% in favor of the four year terms and fewer wards. Our current structure leaves us with many new councilors term after term after term, with accompanying "very important things that have to get done NOW" and that constantly disrupts the long-term ongoing work of municipal governance. We make decisions that will have consequences for decades and those decisions sometimes take years to work.

⁴ <https://communityservices.us/2025-point-in-time-count-shows-shifting-trends-in-tri-county-homelessness/>

⁵ <https://www.klcc.org/politics-government/2026-07-22/corvallis-ballot-measure-city-council-terms-seats>, <https://corvallisadvocate.com/corvallis-voters-to-decide-city-council-reforms-this-november-heres-a-deeper-look/>

Constantly having to get so many new councilors up to speed is extremely inefficient and leads to mission drift. Also when there is no institutional knowledge, there is little context within which to make those critical decisions.

Fewer Wards will also help with efficiency and big picture decision-making, and from "a use of staff time" perspective. The amount of staff time it takes to bring up to speed, and answer questions from, 9 Councilors, half or more so often new, makes for wasted time and resources we can no longer afford to ignore. If we are to be a lean operation and save money so we can sustain the provision of services to the community, this is a reality that cannot be ignored. Staff time is money. Also, every decision we make affects the entire city. Having 9 wards leads to many councilors viewing matters from a more ward-centric perspective at the expense of decisions for the entire city as a whole.

There are other reasons. I am happy to share the website we are creating to help people understand better when it is ready - probably Monday or Tuesday.

We need to pass these reforms so we are in the best position to make decisions that will help our community thrive. It is that simple. It is time for a change so we can do better for our community, and surmount the huge challenges cities like Corvallis face.

SECTION 6: YOUR CAMPAIGN

17. What volunteer support would be most helpful to your campaign between now and November?

NONE, but if your members are inclined to support the ballot measure regarding terms and wards, there is nothing more impactful they can do to help shape a more effective Council going forward than help get those passed. Happy to discuss.

SECTION 7: CLOSING

18. Is there anything else you'd like our chapter to know about your candidacy that wasn't covered above?

My bottom line is that serving the community is not so much about my priorities as it is making the best decisions for the entire community. As our City Manager likes to say, "Not me. We."

Thank you for "listening". I welcome a conversation anytime.

As a candidate in the race for city council in the city of Corvallis, 2026, I pledge to run a positive campaign, without resorting to negative attacks against fellow candidates.

Carolyn Mayers 08/08/26
Candidate signature: _____ Date: _____