Tara Winer

Plan Boulder questionnaire:

1. This fall, Boulder citizens are being asked to approve a $400 million bond issue to pay for backlogged maintenance on rec centers and fire/police facilities. Unaccounted for in this funding source is about a $30 million backlog of deferred maintenance of Open Space and Mountain Park trails. What priority would you place on addressing this backlog and where should the funds come from? Are there policies that should be passed to prevent future trail maintenance backlogs?

I am very concerned the city will allow the same thing that happened with our $400 million in deferred maintenance to happen to Open Space's deferred maintenance.

We should not allow funds dedicated to Open Space to be redirected to other uses to the point that OSMP cannot afford to properly maintain our trails.

We should also minimize the addition of new trails until we ensure our existing trails are in good condition and have the resources necessary to keep them that way. Minimizing, or even freezing the building of new trails will help with the maintenance backlog and the cost. (I feel the same way about new parks when we can't even afford to take care of our current parks.)

Other ways to pay for the backlog: we have to look at our current administrative costs and see if there is any room there to cut. As you may know, Boulder charges Open Space, and its other dedicated funds, a share of citywide "cost allocation": HR, legal, accounting, IT, etc. I agree with this, as it isn't fair to ask the General Fund to absorb 100% of costs that these departments also use. However, things can go overboard. I think we can set a cap on cost allocation as a share of a dedicated fund's budget, so administrative overhead can't outpace a fund's core mission.

2. What level of wildfire mitigation funding should be the responsibility of Open Space and Mountain Parks?

Open Space pays into the cost of fire mitigation, and it should. However, I would like to see more of that come from the Climate Tax fund and less from the Open Space fund. The voters specifically voted to tax themselves for Open Space. We have to be careful how we use that funding.

I do think it’s time to look for other ways to increase revenue for OSMP. I hear that the revenue we make from parking meters barely makes up for the cost of that program. But it’s worth it to have a citizen working group to think of ideas to increase revenue, especially since so many OSMP users don’t live in Boulder and I would like them to help us and pay for their fair share.

3. Given our high risk from wildfires and limited resources, what 2 or 3 measures should Council prioritize in the city's code, staffing and financial resources, and the council bully pulpit ? Who should be responsible and where should the money come from?

Home hardening on just new builds wis not good enough. And voluntary measures are also not good enough, in my opinion. We need mandatory retroactive home hardening in the most vulnerable areas of the city: the first two rows of homes that back up to Open Space, or extending 1,500 feet into the built environment.

Possible measures:

- Removing all flammable trees and bushes

- Installing 1/8" screens on vents

- Creating a 5-foot noncombustible perimeter around the home

The Wildfire Resilience Assistance Program already provides up to $2,000 per property, funded through Climate Tax, with upfront payment for lower-income households. For many on the WUI, $2000 will not be enough. Perhaps we can use low-interest financing to cover the gap between $2,000 and actual project cost.

We can also partner with the county, which has programs and funding for wildfire mitigation. Right now the County gives $500 per household. We should press the county for more help, as wildfire mitigation is their purview as well and we are the ones on the front lines.

4. What is your understanding of the reliability of Boulder's long term water supply? Do you view it as prudent to carefully match the demand for more development with the ability to provide water into the future? What concerns, if any, do you have about this?

Allegedly and according to the City of Boulder, we are doing fine with our water supply. However, you just have to look at Boulder Creek to know we are in a drought and are not doing fine. This year's snowpack in the basins feeding the reservoirs was 25–30% under normal. And much of our water supply comes from these reservoirs. And the prognosis re: the Colorado River is not good either.

So yes, I think it's a good idea to match demand for more development with the ability to provide water into the future. My concern is that we always have tradeoffs. People are always asking Council to do something about the lack of middle income housing. That seems to be one of the communities top concerns- the price of housing and the missing middle. That is why I want to see area 3 planning reserve developed with another Holiday type neighborhood. But I don't want ALL of area 3 planning reserve developed. Just a part. And much of it should be parkland, as was the original intent, as we cannot forget that we need carbon sequestration and trees play an enormous role in cooling Boulder off.

5. How do you see your responsibility as a council member versus the responsibilities of the City Manager and city staff?

Council makes the laws. They are legislators. The mayor runs the meeting (amongst other things). The mayor has only one vote like the rest of council. The city manager works for Council. The city manager carries out the day to day work of the city in accordance with council council approved plans. The City Attorney's role is to make sure the city work is carried out according to local, state and federal law.

Council informs the city manager what their priorities are at council retreats, which are scheduled after a new council is seated. She then asks staff to bring back to us implementation options using our ideas as well as staff's ideas for guidance.
She will do the same if we have a majority of 5 on an issue that is not listed as a priority.

As an example, if I want to see us require mandatory wildfire hardening for homes on the WUI, I would need at least 2 other council members for a total of 3 to ask staff to research it. Even better, if I had 4 other council members that agreed, then we can ask staff to create an ordinance. The best way is if something is a council priority. A council priority is chosen at council retreats where a super majority agrees on approximate 5-10 priorities, and that number depends on the scope of the priorities.

6. As a council member, what basic considerations will you apply to your appointments to city Boards and Commissions? And what value would you place on advice to the council from those boards and commissions?

Prior to being on Council, I served on BURA and then the Parks and Recreation Board. And I am on BURA once again. I care deeply about how boards and commissions operate, which is why I sit on the Boards and Commissions subcommittee.

I believe the biggest problem with boards and commissions is that appointments are often politicized. Oftentimes, instead of picking someone because they have a great understanding of the topic or are a good, independent thinker, two important qualities in a board member (and a board member should have at least one of them, if not both) someone is picked because a council member feels they're on their "side," whether it's land use and zoning or Open Space. I'm sure you're aware of this.

However, I still believe in the importance of boards and commissions, and I highly value their opinions, both the board's collective view and individual members' opinions on a particular issue. I call individual board and commission members directly to get their take on issues as they come up. I carefully read the letters that are sent to us yearly when the boards weigh in on our priorities and seriously consider their viewpoints.

7. How do you see the Council's responsibility in setting and reviewing the budget? What changes in process or budget allocations you would actively pursue if you were elected and explain why?

The city manager and her team prepare and set the budget. Council reviews it. It's council's job to look at all the details and potentially make changes. One important note: it's not that council can't change anything, but if council wants to increase the budget somewhere, they have to find other places to cut it, and a majority of council, five members , has to agree to this.

How I would change it: I would rather council discuss the allocations in the budget before the budget is set. We currently weigh in after it's set, so the direction is harder to change and it's hard to reallocate.

The budget conversation isn't structured for council to get into the weeds, but I believe getting more into the weeds on the budget should be one of our core responsibilities. On paper it is — but in reality, I don't think it is.

What I would pursue: I believe we don't have enough money in the budget allocated for core services, like snow and ice removal, as an example.

First, I would like to look at programs that don't give us enough bang for our buck. Just because a program has been in existence for years and years doesn't mean that, in this time of a constrained budget, we should keep it.

Second, I would look at our use of consultants:
- How many we have
- What they do
- How much was spent on consultants per project
- When we can use staff instead of consultants for the work required

Because if we can reduce a project by even one consultant, we can use that money for other purposes, like the Spruce Pool or Family Homelessness.

Third, I would ask staff to come to us when they are going over budget on a major project, so we are aware.

Fourth, I want to look at staffing levels — what they are now compared to five years ago. Our city policy seems to be moving staff rather than removing staff. That's a fine policy if we weren't in such a budget crunch. But we are in a budget crunch, and the community has wants and needs we need to deliver on.

8. A citizen group has developed a proposal for the city to hire a Performance Auditor (different than a financial auditor) plus a small supporting staff and an Audit Committee that would report to City Council, with funding in the 2027 budget? Do you support this proposal? Would you make it a high priority for 2027?
I think this is a great idea. Thank you to the citizens that have worked on this. Boulder already tracks whether programs are hitting their goals through their processes, but departments write their own metrics for their own programs. Checking one's own department without bias is just about impossible. And we need to show transparency and accountability from an independent source to get back community trust in government.

The office would answer to Council and an Audit Committee, not to the city manager. This is a good thing, as we need an independent source to realistically critique.

An auditor could do other things like test whether programs are actually reaching the residents they're meant to reach. I am not looking for a gotcha exercise. The goal is making sure programs actually work and taxpayer money is used well.

According to responsible sources, Boulder doesn't need a ballot measure to do this. The City Charter already lets Council appoint "an auditor for such independent audits as are in this charter required or authorized to be made by order of the council" . Council would simply need to pass an ordinance defining things.

Why I think we should make room for it in the 2027 budget is because it will SAVE us money in the long run. And yes I will make it a high priority.

9. Do you support the $400 million tax measure and associated bond issuance that will total $650 million, known as the Recreation and Safety Bond, to address deferred maintenance of seven city buildings that will be on the ballot in November? Why or why not? For incumbents. Has your position changed, and how?

As I said in the recent forum, originally my position was no. I thought $400M was way too high. Property tax hikes are hard on seniors on fixed incomes who bought their homes decades ago for so much less than they are worth now and are now saddled with property taxes many of them cannot afford. Second, businesses pay 4x the amount and it’s the small businesses that bear the burden due to triple net. (I asked for the amount to be reduced to $200M but got no takers.)

Also, the ballot measure polled poorly, so I saw no reason to put it on the ballot as is. My belief was that we didn’t have enough public trust in the workings of our local government for people to vote yes.
However, then this happened:
For months, the South Boulder Rec Center advocates were asking for a lap pool. The City had generic language about aquatics in the ballot language. I was able to get the language in the ballot measure changed to “lap pools” instead of the general aquatics language that was there. After that happened, I could not very well vote no to putting this on the ballot. It would have been hypocritical on my part.

So I changed my stance to yes.
However, I don't think it will pass. If it doesn't, then I first want to first regain public trust by being transparent about the details at Alpine Balsam, and learning from those mistakes. And by learning I mean making sure those same type of mistakes don't happen again. And I would want to bring forth a new ballot measure that is more detailed so people know exactly what they would be paying for, and trimmed down to the necessities.

10.How do you view the city's current state of public safety? What 2 or 3 specific things do you think council needs to change?

In actuality, most crime is down, including car theft and bike theft. We also don't need 72 hours anymore to remove tents. We can remove them same day. So you will see less tents, if any, in our public spaces. Our bike lanes and underpasses are also, for the most part, safer.

Our SAMPS team does a good job. And I spend a lot my time working on this with other community members.

What is not down are public menacing, and low level misdemeanors. One of the reasons is our jail is full capacity, so if you commit a crime, it has to be serious for you to even get arrested and go to jail. Also, the state laws in regard to many of these lower level crimes have minimal sentences. What to do about it is the question. People experiencing mental health challenges have very few options for help. And the same goes for people with drug addictions. Until the county, state and federal government step up, cities will not have the means to help people or alleviate the problems associated with these issues.

What we can do:

-Activate public spaces, like bringing a permanent farmer's market to 13th St,

-Hire more urban rangers and police officers

-Have more police presence and cameras downtown, by the Bandshell, at the municipal building etc.

-Hire a police officer to specifically bike on our creek path and all our bike paths to make sure it's safe- both perceived safety and actual safety is important.

-We can be part of the solution by visiting our downtown more often. That is what I try to do.