PLAN-Boulder County
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PLAN-Boulder 2026 Candidate Questionnaire

Open Space

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?

The 2027-2032 Capital Improvement Plan includes between 5-6 Million to be spent each year to address the backlog. The funding is coming from the CCRS Tax, and has been prioritized, and I will continue to support that priortization. We could also create a fund within the Open Space fund for future maintenance but we would need to have discussions about what tradeoffs we would be willing to make. I am also curious about whether we could charge a parking fee for visitors outside of the city. I do want Open Space to be enjoyed by many, but we could ask our visitors to pitch in a little as is common in other public parks like Brainard lake. This year alone, a portion of a $200k deferred maintenance allocation will be used to maintain parking instead of going to trails.

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

I think this number will change over time, as our fuel management work shifts to just maintenance, managing grasses, etc. I think it is reasonable for Open Space to fund some of the initial work along with the many other groups funding the work, especially as the work requires expertise about how to maintain a healthy eco-system. However, as we receive grants, I think we should prioritize returning money to the Open Space Fund for items that may have been better funded by other funds. This would be a good place for the Open Space Board to weigh in.

Wildfire Mitigation

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?

The wildfire mitigation study session packet was really helpful. I would focus on managing fuels in the WUI in a way that also supports the health of the eco-system, including burns, grazing, and mowing. Most of this funding would come from the OSMP budget but might be offset by grants the city is applying for. Home hardening is also extremely important, and I am excited about an improved home hardening hub. Over 30% of homeowners surveyed indicated that the main reason they hadn't hardened their home was a lack of information and resources about how to do it. With this new hub, our existing rebate program, and, ideally, some positive neighborhood energy to show off our home hardening, we'll get most homes hardened. For the last group of homes, we can then pursue an ordinance or other mechanism to require hardening with funding as needed. Again, there are some grants available but we may need to temporarily shift funding from another fund to meet this need. It is unclear what the cost might be but we'll learn more at our follow up wildfire meeting in October.

<u>Environment and Climate Change</u>

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?

I was fortunate to tour our water supply, including the system of reservoirs, dams, ditches and pipes around Nederland. It is an impressive system, managed and protected by two on-site employees that live in the area. The current law favors our water supply given our senior rights and we continue to have more water than we need, selling water to other communities each year. In fact, Boulder was not technically in a drought this year, but instead in 'drought-watch'. While our water supply is good, we need to be careful due to the impacts of climate change and the possibility that laws might change, redistributing water.

One of the most interesting parts of the study into Area 3 was the water analysis. The staff showed which levels of development of that area could be initiated without impacting the balance between our water supply and usage. Staff considered changes to our supply due to climate change in this analysis. This was the first time that we got an idea of what our upper limit of development might be, although there are many factors in these decisions depending on how much water we use for irrigation and agriculture. I believe we need to always consider the availability of water when we pursue development, particularly development in Area 3 which will be more impactful to our water supply than infill or redevelopment. I also believe we need to monitor our flows into our natural creeks and understand when we might need to release more water into them to maintain the habitat living in and along the creek. The Colorado Water Trust has partnered with us in this area to help our creeks, and I hope to continue to work with them.

Governance

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

My responsibility is to manage our three staff members - the City Manager, the City Attorney and the Judge. In addition, my colleagues and I shape and adopt policy that is then carried out by the City Manager and city staff. The Council also provides input into the budget throughout the year, either directly or by changing our priorities that require funding, and then finally adopts the budget annually. Finally, as a representative elected by the community and a self-governing body, my responsibility is to ensure there is transparency around how we make decisions around policy and budget. For instance, if I notice that we are not following our own rules around giving guidance during a study session, it is my job to correct that. It is critical that we always prioritize good governance and transparency.

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?

While every Board and Commission is different, I look at the current make-up of the Board or Commission and see if there is any perspective that might be missing. This might include connecting with the current members of the Board. After reviewing the applications, I then think about who might be the best to round out the Board or Commission. I place a lot of value on the advice from the Boards and Commissions, especially when there is a topic the board has been researching. I am hoping to hear more from OSMP and EAB during our wildfire conversations given the work and funding implications.

City Finances

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

As noted above, setting the operating and capital budgets each year is a major part of the Council workplan. For the capital budget, I am interested in creating a Capital Budget Advisory Panel (or something like that) composed of community members with some understanding of capital projects and financing that would consistently evaluate our capital budget and financing together. The group would also be notified of changes to the scope of projects and the process may require the approval of the panel and/or council for changes that meet some threshold. I believe a panel and process like this would have helped better track large projects like Alpine, and create a better understanding of the initial budget and where conditions or changes impacted the budget, and how the council approved each modification. There is already good information

available about all of the city projects on the city website, but I think more information about the financing with initial forecast budget vs. actual would be helpful.

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8. A citizen group has developed a proposal for the city to hire a Performance Auditor (different from 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 do support this proposal, of course assuming it is consistent with our charter. Other cities have auditors and it appears to be successful. I am particularly interested in an audit that looks at performance of programs across the city and county. I would make it a priority but I don't believe I can find a way to put it in the 2027 budget, which has second reading next month and the push so far is to find more money for wildfire mitigation. Finding funding for another 1-2 employees would be more realistic to do next year, with a priority at the beginning of 2027.

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?

Unfortunately, the needs addressed in this bond are not going away, and it will continue to get more expensive every year we delay. Therefore, I continue to support the bond. However, I fully appreciate that we did not make a strong enough case to our community, and are asking a lot of them as people are impacted by rising taxes and new fees. I am hoping that the infrastructure panel described above can help as we look to fund future projects. Moving forward, I would hope that we focus on creating replacement funds for our critical infrastructure. We are already putting more money aside for ongoing maintenance to minimize unfunded maintenance costs in the future.

<u>Public Safety</u>

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?

I believe we need to continue to implement the plan Clutch developed, which was unanimously passed by council, and the Re-Imagine policing plan. We have already seen some progress, including the lowest Point-in-Time Count of unsheltered homeless since 2023. However, we need to do more to make sure our public spaces are welcoming to all. I continue to advocate for support from the county to help with those people struggling with mental health issues alongside being unhoused. In addition, we need to be clearer about our evacuation strategies at a neighborhood level in case of an emergency like a wildfire.

Business

11. What is your view of the issues facing downtown and what would you advocate to address these issues?

The second and third floor vacancy in downtown and the trend to work remotely has continued, impacting mid-week foot traffic. Our downtown retailers and restaurants continue to feel the impact despite active weekends. I am supportive of the work in progress to revitalize the East Bookend by the bandshell, which I believe will help even during the week. I also believe the Sundance festival will have a positive impact during our slow season downtown. Public safety is an issue that is getting better but needs more work, and I continue to advocate for the implementation of the homelessness plan we approved. Finally, the increases in taxes and fees directly increase rents throughout Boulder. Our blue-ribbon strategy work recommended moving away from depending on sales tax to fund city work to more stable sources like property taxes and fees. However, we'll need to continue to evaluate how these increases are impacting the viability of small businesses, especially in the downtown.

Transportation

12. What would you advocate for to address the huge number of in-commuters driving into Boulder to access their jobs?

I do support increasing options for public transportation, including the bus rapid transit expansion to Longmont. The new train (finally) from Denver could also have an impact, but to get 10 trips a day, we'll have another new sales tax of .333% on top of the .4% for FastTracks. It stings a little but I will support expanding commuter trains. I also support the requirement of large employers to create a fund to support transportation alternatives to single occupancy vehicles, whether it's providing eco passes or enabling vanpools.

Questions for Mayoral Candidates

13. What is your view of the role of Mayor versus the role of the council members? What changes would you propose to improve the role of the Mayor without going beyond the limitations in the Charter? 14. What is your view of the relationship between the City Manager and the Mayor?

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