

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**2024 Spring Election – Oshkosh City Council**

**1. Please provide some personal background information.**

- a. **Name** - Jacob Floam
- b. **Occupation** - Congressional staffer/graduate student
- c. **List any community activities you are involved with:**
  - i. Winnebago County Supervisor (District 16)
  - ii. Member, Oshkosh Rotary Southwest
  - iii. Member, Most Blessed Sacrament Parish Council
  - iv. Member, Oshkosh Knights of Columbus Council 614
  - v. Leadership Oshkosh Class of 2024
  - vi. Member, Winnebago County Historical Society
  - vii. Member, Propel Oshkosh Young Professionals group

**2. What are your background and qualifications for this City Council position, and what value will you bring to the City Council personally?**

Public service is a passion of mine! It's something I have pursued in my career and extracurriculars. I've served as staff on the federal and state levels of government and as an elected official on the local level. I'm also studying local government through UW-Oshkosh's Masters in Public Administration Program which I'm proud to be a part of. For me, elected office is about servant leadership. I love this community, and I want to do my part to help Oshkosh be one of the most vibrant cities in Wisconsin. I've carried that mindset with me on the Winnebago County Board, and I will as well on the Oshkosh City Council. On the Winnebago County Board, I've gotten a front row seat in local policymaking and seen the issues that are impacting our community up close. I've collaborated with my colleagues on common sense solutions to help address these issues whether it's about quality of life, economic development, and combating the opioid crisis. I want to bring a spirit of collaboration to the Oshkosh City Council to help further address the issues in our community and be a champion of good government.

**3. Please outline your personal top priorities for the City of Oshkosh and your plan for seeing these priorities realized.**

I want Oshkosh to be an affordable and safe city where everyone feels welcome. In order for us to be the best we can be as a community, we need to ensure that local government is doing its job effectively and efficiently while achieving its mission and helping foster a dynamic local economic environment. That means good roads and utilities, a strong parks system, clean water, and government that is being financially responsible and preparing for tomorrow. We also need to address our housing shortage. In order to do this, I'd like to see the city launch a formal task force consisting of our Oshkosh Chamber and GO

EDC partners, other local government counterparts, and community stakeholders to come up with policy recommendations for council to adopt so we can start solving this.

**4. Several geographic locations within the city can benefit from attention to facilitate economic growth and development. Please identify and discuss what you consider to be the top two or three economic development priorities you will champion as a member of the City Council.**

In terms of economic development, my priorities lie in housing, investment in roads, and building our local workforce. Our city has a housing shortage and housing availability is a vital part of the economic development equation. Council should proactively pursue remediation of blighted lots/brownfield sites in order to develop additional locations for housing or business given how Oshkosh is landlocked. Increased road investment is also a priority of mine especially in areas that are typically underserved in road and sidewalk repair. Additionally, workforce attraction and retention is something Oshkosh needs to focus on. We have more jobs than people, and we should want our local college students to start their careers here after they graduate. In terms of particular locations, the Sawdust District, Aviation Business Park, and downtown are all areas of focus for me.

**5. The City of Oshkosh is considering or has considered (depending on the timing of your response) a Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF)/utility fee increase proposal to eliminate special assessments for street/sidewalk improvement projects. The Oshkosh Chamber recently surveyed its member businesses, and 26% of its respondents favored this approach, 33% favored maintaining the current special assessment system, and 41% favored including all street and sidewalk improvements in the general levy. Please discuss your position on this proposal.**

Before city council voted to approve the new VRF/utility fee proposal, Oshkosh was one of the last municipalities in Wisconsin that heavily relied on special assessments as a primary means for funding street and sidewalk repairs. However, the system that city council voted to approve leaves a number of homeowners out in the cold as they still are on the hook for their assessments while additionally paying the vehicle registration and increased utility fees. Going forward, these individuals should be extended a tax credit or some form of relief. I also think that city council should do its best to limit raises to the VRF and utility fees. However, I think this speaks to a larger point about the fact that the city isn't investing enough in our roads. The city's fiscal health has improved to the point where we can take the opportunity to invest more in our roads which we badly need for both residents and businesses.

**6. Municipalities across the State are moving to Fee for Service approaches to pay for the delivery of municipal services otherwise funded by the annual property tax levy. Do you support a funding approach like this? If so, what current city services would be appropriately funded as a Fee for Service? If a new Fee for Service is imposed, should property taxpayers receive an equal, proportionate tax levy credit?**

In order to keep property taxes under control, I support Fee for Service approaches for certain city services within financial reason. The most appropriate place for this is in our city park system. Boat launches, shelter and pavilion reservations, passes for the Menominee Park Zoo and Pollock Community Water Park are all examples. The Leach Amphitheater is also a Fee for Service revenue driver for the city as are parking permits. If a new Fee for Service is imposed, I believe that a proportionate property tax credit should also be implemented. In my opinion, the city relies too much on the property tax levy, and disbursing that out can provide relief to citizens.

**7. The city established a stormwater utility in 2003 to manage stormwater runoff issues in the community. Residential property owners are assessed for one equivalent runoff unit (ERU). Non-residential property owners are assessed annual fees based on the amount of impervious space (parking lots and rooftops) to determine the amount of ERUs that exist on a parcel. The initial (annual) stormwater utility fee in 2003 was \$19.10 per ERU and grew to \$237.72 per ERU in 2023 while holding the increase flat in 2024. Do you find this rate of increase acceptable? Do you believe that continued increases at that level over the next 20 years are acceptable? Please outline any ideas you might have to curtail the growth in stormwater utility fees.**

Oshkosh's stormwater utility fee is too high. If we are not mindful of the financial impact of our fees on members of the community, we run the risk of being a city that is less affordable which will deter growth and attraction of new residents and jobs. Uncontrolled rate increases over the next twenty years will be unsustainable and will further bite into affordability. City council should look into means to curtail the growth of these stormwater utility fees, and one option (state law permitting) could be tying the fees to the core CPI inflation rate as the maximum it could be raised in a given year.

**8. There is currently a proposal being brought forth to change the title of "Mayor" to Council President" to reflect the post's lack of executive powers. Furthermore, the proposal eventually has the position being selected by the City Council and not voted on by the electorate. Do you support or oppose this proposal? Please provide your reasons for your position.**

Oshkosh has a council-manager form of government (also known as a Chapter 64 city in state statute). Under this form of government, executive authority runs through the city manager instead of the mayor. This question was posed about twenty years ago, and the city held a referendum in 2004 which affirmed that the public would like to keep an elected mayor regardless of what their authority may be. Recently, city council debated the issue again. In my opinion, if city council wishes to change the title and means of

electing a mayor/council president in the future, I would like to see this be put back to referendum. My personal preference is to keep an elected mayor/council president, but the people of Oshkosh should ultimately decide this question. A potential referendum would not be about changing Oshkosh's form of government, but would rather be on whether or not the public would prefer an elected mayor or move to a council president elected among members of city council.

**9. With a low unemployment rate and strong local economy, many employers report difficulty attracting and retaining talent. What is the city's role in attracting people to Oshkosh and ensuring that Oshkosh is an attractive place to live and work?**

One of my goals is to have Oshkosh become a more competitive spot for young professionals as they begin their careers. Whether it's staying after graduating from UWOC or coming to Oshkosh from other parts of Wisconsin or the country, I want to see our city be a competitive location. Housing, workforce development, and the cost of living are all factors. The city needs to encourage investment in workforce housing so we can be a more attractive place for young professionals. We also need to be working with our Oshkosh Chamber and GO EDC partners to maintain an environment that is friendly to economic development. City government also needs to do its part in trying to keep the cost of living low as well as maintaining a vibrant downtown.

**10. A housing study completed for the City of Oshkosh in March of 2022 noted that Oshkosh is expected to grow by more than 3,200 residents by 2030, meaning the city will need to produce almost 1,700 new housing units. While Oshkosh has made significant progress in this area, there is still much work to be done. What do you see as the primary barriers to increasing the housing stock in Oshkosh? What will you do to address Oshkosh's need for additional workforce housing.**

In my opinion, the community that figures out housing is well on their way to answering many of the questions that cities of our size in the Midwest face. Subsequently, addressing our housing shortage has been one of the core issues of my campaign. Oshkosh needs a variety of different housing options and workforce housing is a key part of that. Workforce housing itself can take a variety of forms ranging from single family homes, condos, or apartments. Currently, a number of barriers exist to developing more housing such as the age of our current housing stock, the city's landlocked position, blighted lots and brownfields, and the high cost of construction in today's economic environment. As previously mentioned, I would like to see an intergovernmental task force formed around housing which also involves community stakeholders in the nonprofit and economic development spaces. They can come up with policy proposals that city council can adopt so we can take the first steps in addressing this shortage. Ultimately, we need to look at all of these obstacles meaningfully to find a comprehensive solution.