

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**2023 Spring Election – Oshkosh Mayor**

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

- a. Name: Aaron Wojciechowski
- b. Occupation: Student Life Professional – Lawrence University
- c. List any community activities you are involved with: Oshkosh City Council

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

For the last seven years I have served the people of Oshkosh, first for two terms (four years) on the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors, as an educator for the Oshkosh Area School District, and most recently finishing up my second year on the Oshkosh City Council. I would bring organization, leadership, and empathy to foster collaboration and create a space where people feel welcomed, heard, and respected. As a younger person I also bring a unique perspective of how we attract and retain young professionals in Oshkosh.

**3. Please outline what you consider to be the City of Oshkosh's 3 most critical issues.**

- Finding a solution to address the exorbitant costs of special assessments.
- Providing resources and solutions to combat homelessness in Oshkosh and increase affordable housing in general.
- Environmental justice (Improving sustainability, diversity equity and inclusion efforts)

**4. What are the biggest challenges the city faces currently and in the next 5 years? What should the city do to respond and overcome these challenges?**

The biggest challenges the city will face in the next 5 years is finding a reliable and sustainable funding mechanism to cover the ever-decreasing amount of shared revenue from the state. This will have an impact on city services, fees, utility rates, infrastructure, and resources. In addition, creating a welcoming environment for business and development to close the gap in affordable housing, finally, recruiting and retaining a young workforce are challenges we face now but will only be exacerbated in the next five years if we don't act now.

**5. Previous City Councils have considered proposals to change the policy on how to fund the current street improvement and sidewalk replacement program. Past**

**proposals included establishing a Transportation Utility Fee Program or a Transportation Assessment Replacement Fee as a means to eliminate special assessments for street reconstruction/improvement projects and the sidewalk replacement program. Do you support this type of a program? If so, what should be the basis to establish a transportation fee? Please discuss your position.**

When I first ran for Council, I supported the idea of a Utility Fee to help lower the cost on homeowners. Since being on Council, my thoughts on the topic evolved. While I still support the idea or at least exploring how we could find a balanced fee that benefits both residents and businesses, the fact is we can't move on in without a potential lawsuit. So, it's not a viable solution at the moment, that's why we've directed the City Manager to keep exploring possible solutions.

- 6. Municipalities across the State are moving to Fee for Service approaches to pay for the delivery of municipal services that were 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 tax payers receive an equal, proportionate tax levy credit?**

I think the way Oshkosh residents pay for services now is fine. It's a payment model that I am open to exploring and learning about.

- 7. The City established a Storm Water Utility in 2003 for the purposes of managing storm water run-off 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 roof tops) to determine the amount of ERUs that exists on a parcel. The initial (annual) storm water utility fee in 2003 was \$19.10 per ERU and has grown to \$237.72 per ERU in 2023. Do you find this rate of increase acceptable? Do you believe that continued rates of increases at that level over the next 20 years is acceptable? Please outline any ideas you might have to curtail the growth in storm water utility fees.**

I do not think this jump in cost is acceptable. Unfortunately, the new Clearwells project has greatly contributed to this recent rise in cost. Maintaining clean water standards, reducing pollution, and preventing floods is the goal and purpose of effective stormwater management but it needs to be equitable and realistic for residents to burden. Curtailing the growth in storm water utility fees will require partnership at all levels of government to identify and provide additional funding such as a Clean Water State Revolving Fund program. It will possibly require a reorganization of our city's budgetary priorities which could mean delaying projects, and some creativeness with solutions such as green/sustainable infrastructure.

- 8. With a low unemployment rate and strong local economy, many employers are reporting difficulty in attracting and retaining talent. What is the role of the city in attracting people to Oshkosh and ensuring that Oshkosh is an attractive place to live and work.**

As a city we want to make Oshkosh an attractive place to live, work, visit, and do business in. This can be done in many ways such as having a thriving downtown and business sector, making our city codes less cumbersome and burdensome on developers and businesses. It is also recognizing that younger people want to live in communities that are more progressive minded and value areas like sustainability, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. If we want to have a diverse and prosperous workforce, we need to create a community that values those things.

- 9. The State of Wisconsin currently imposes levy limits on local municipalities but allows for levy increases based on new development. Do you support the continuation of this? Should there be modifications? Should this be repealed? Please discuss.**

The levy limits in practice are not a bad idea, but it does not work well if shared revenue does not keep on pace with the rising costs of living. The fact is as our shared revenue has continued to diminish it is becoming increasingly more difficult for communities to fund more development. This will result in the need to either make cuts or increase current funding mechanisms or find new funding mechanisms. The first two are not ideal and the third option is a challenge in itself. I believe sustainable efforts and initiatives are one solution to generating new sources of funding but it's not the final and only solution.