

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Candidate Questionnaire**

2021 Spring Election – Oshkosh City Council

1. Please provide some personal background information.

- a. Name: Aaron Wojciechowski
- b. Occupation: Aftercare Site Coordinator
- c. List any community activities you are involved with: n/a

2. Please outline what you consider to be the City of Oshkosh 3 – 5 most critical issues.

The most critical issues in my opinion are; recovering from COVID-19 and the impact on the budget. We must make sure our budget is balanced despite losses as a result of COVID-19. In addition my other top priorities are continued growth and economic development, criminal justice reform, sustainability, and talking issues of diversity and inclusion.

3. There are a number of geographic locations within the city that 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 that you will champion as a member of the city council?

The key locations of Oshkosh where I would work to improve and create economic development are south of the Fox River, specifically South Main St area. There are lots of opportunities for growth there. I would also like to see the continuation of development near the new Oshkosh Corp. Headquarters. Both locations are prime locations to attract businesses and new industries without disturbing the residential areas of our city. Finally I would like to see some more attention given to the UW Oshkosh region. If we want to attract young people to work and live here, we need to make sure their first impression is good. That won't happen when the roads and off-campus housing are in poor condition as it is now.

4. 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.

I support a hybrid model to benefit both residential and commercial properties. I believe for residential properties a utility fee model would be more financially manageable. I

would like to work with businesses and commercial properties to figure out what model would work best for them whether that be a special assessment or a utility fee. I am not supportive of a wheel tax right now.

- 5. Municipalities across the State are moving to Fee for Service approaches to pay for the delivery 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 would need more information before making a decision. I would like to hear from the Chamber on their views and look at other communities that have implemented this type of funding approach to see the pros and cons. *More information is needed.*

- 6. 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 storm water utility fee in 2003 was \$19.10 per ERU and has grown to \$196.92 per ERU, a 14.7% annual rate increase. Do you believe this increase is reasonable? Please outline your ideas to curtail the growth in storm water utility fees.**

I would need more information on why the ERU has grown so exponentially. I support the idea of ERUs but would want to make sure we're not disproportionately hurting and/or relying on businesses to cover the costs. *More information is needed.*

- 7. Local governments have asked the Legislature to prohibit the use of physically comparable vacant properties as comparable sales to occupied properties for property tax assessment purposes, known as the "dark store" loophole. The result of this policy would allow tax collectors to more subjectively assess property value and taxes, and make it harder for businesses to challenge their tax bill. Do you support the eliminating the so-called "dark store" loophole to allow municipal assessors to disproportionately assess commercial property owners? Please discuss.**

I support the elimination of the "dark store" loophole to keep big box stores accountable and to shift the tax burden away from homeowners.

- 8. 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.**

I believe local governance belongs to the local governments, so I think that local governments should have control over their levy limits. It's easier to hold local elected officials accountable for reckless spending as opposed to those in the Legislature. The needs of each community are unique and local governments need the tools to meet those unique challenges.

9. Over the past year, the State of Wisconsin has imposed a number of restrictions on businesses and individuals aimed at reducing the spread of Covid-19. As a City Council member, would in support imposing further restrictions on the citizenry of Oshkosh? If so, please outline what those restrictions might be. Please discuss your answer.

I believe the restrictions set in place at the moment are sufficient. As larger amounts of the population are becoming vaccinated, I see no need for more or stronger restrictions. I would continue to support a mask mandate and encourage other safe practices until advised by the CDC and health experts that it is no longer necessary.

10. In the proposed 2021-22 Biennial State Budget, Gov. Evers proposed the creation of a ½-cent municipal sales tax that communities over 30,000 could enact if approved by local referendum. If this proposal were to be retained, would you support the creation of a ½-cent city-wide sales tax? Please discuss.

I do support it as a future tool for growing our tax base and taking advantage of the high tourism Oshkosh sees. At the moment It is not something I would support, nor do I see a need for it given the financial challenges COVID-19 has caused. I would like to see this passed in the Legislature to give local governments some more freedom in how they operate.