CITY OF STOUGHTON ALDERMANIC APPOINTMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

District 4 - Vacant Seat

Name: Patrick Butler **Occupation:** Branch Operations Systems Manager, UW Credit Union

Street Address: [redacted] Stoughton WI 53589 **E-mail Address:** [redacted]

Home Phone #: [redacted] **Cell Phone #:** [redacted]

1) **Tell us about your occupation, training and education. Describe the characteristics, qualifications and experiences you have that will enable you to do a good job as an Alderperson.**
I am a graduate of UW-Madison with degrees in Political Science and International Relations (Finished in 1994). These degrees were driven by my passion for civic discussion and love of history. But they aren't the best paths for a stable financial career, and so in 1995 I got a job at UW Credit Union. I have worked there ever since. In my varying roles (I started as a teller and now manage all aspects of financial systems for all 31 of our branches state-wide), I have had the opportunity to grow in financial and banking expertise, and also have had great opportunity to participate in formal leadership training have helped me build people leadership skills. I helped start and build my current department within the credit union from a three-person Branch Help Desk to a 10-person Operations department in charge of operations, financial systems and financial hardware for all of the credit union branches and locations. I manage a team of high performing individuals ,and utilize knowledge of communication styles, strengths and crucial conversation skills to understand needs of my team and our internal customers and membership to build consensus and collaborate for win-win solutions.

All that said, I am a firm believer that who we are is not dictated solely by where we work or what our job entails. I am a proud Wisconsinite, having been born in La Crosse, lived in Madison during and after college, and now live in Stoughton. I met my wonderful wife Laurie at work, and we married in Madison in 2003. We moved to Stoughton in 2004, in part because I was nostalgic for a home life similar to what I experienced, in a suburb (Onalaska is where I grew up), in a nice home with a normal-sized yard. We still live in that home, and watching the neighborhood grow up has instilled a love for Stoughton and a desire to see it thrive. We have an incredible son, Colin, who is 16 and has only ever known Stoughton as his home. We've participated as parents in all of his youth sports (I tried coaching soccer once – total disaster) and have watched him grown as a young man in our school system and city. Colin is a Scout, having started at St Ann's in Cubs. I have been an Adult Leader in Scouts since then, which has helped teach me patience, and that as difficult as it is to wrangle a bunch of kids, sometimes wrangling adults is more challenging. I am a consensus-builder and troubleshooter, and those strengths have helped me in roles as an Adult Leader, including most recently as Troop 167 Committee Chair (2018-2022).

These life skills which I have accumulated will assist me in understanding the needs of my district, the city, and in building consensus to move Stoughton forward.

2) **In your opinion, what issues are facing Stoughton today? Please pick one of the issues and tell us how you would lead a committee to probable solutions.**

There are several very interesting issues that face the city today from my perspective.

- Infrastructure, especially the state of our roads, is obvious to anyone that drives in the city. I don't think that's unique to Stoughton but is going to be an issue that will need attention and significant resourcing.
- Stoughton is a beautiful city to walk in (Laurie and I walk around town daily), but I would love to see some expended networks outside of the streets network.
- The dam project and revitalizing the downtown will continue to be a point of discussion and potential contention. On the dam I am honestly torn. As an outdoors enthusiast I see the draw of a whitewater park, and I also have a son who is an avid fisherman, and he doesn't support removing the dam for that reason.
- The biggest issue I see however is how to grow Stoughton. One of the more upsetting bits of news we've heard recently is that the School District has had to part with 11 staff members, including teachers/assistants. This is an obvious and sadly predictable offshoot of shrinking enrollment. Schools exist for the purpose of teaching kids, and if there are fewer kids year-over-year, these types of events are inevitable. But that is itself an outcome of stagnation in Stoughton's growth. Stoughton hasn't grown much if at all in the time I've lived here. I'm not being judgmental in that I don't believe this can be attributed to any deliberate or mistaken decisions. We can't as a city simply be a bedroom community for Madison, we're too far out and risk losing our unique identity if we try to be Madison's southern community. And though I love our Norwegian heritage (1/8 Norwegian and proud of it!), that can't sustain us either. If given the opportunity to lead, I believe this is the area to focus on. I believe the solution to organic growth for Stoughton lies in the following:
    - A strong jobs market within the city itself. We're doing a good job of that with Stoughton Trailers and the new cheese maker, and we need to continue to work with existing employers to learn how to sell Stoughton to potential suitors.
    - Make Stoughton a destination for young families, especially with children. Part of that requires a strong starter home market. One of the reasons we chose Stoughton was because we didn't want to live in apartments or townhouses, we wanted a house with a yard but anywhere that was affordable to us near to Madison would be in a more dangerous neighborhood. Stoughton fit the bill, even though it created a serious commute for us. Unfortunately, I don't see that market in Stoughton now. If you can afford a 400k+ home, we have plenty. And we have low-end affordable housing. But middle-market housing is hard to come by. We need to continue to work with developers to fill that market.
    - Continue to ensure that Stoughton remains safe. I am the son of a firefighter, and public safety is a passion of mine. If given an opportunity to serve on a committee that covers Police and Fire, it would be a dream come true.

- Make sure that Stoughton has amenities that draw people in. This is part of what excites me about the proposed development of the former Linnerud parcel by Stoughton Trailers. Stoughton Trailers has done some of the legwork in finding out from their employees why they aren't choosing Stoughton to live. We as a City need to collaborate with them and other employers to understand opportunities.

3) If there was an issue on the table that you agreed with but a majority of your constituents disagreed with, how would you vote and why?

My perception is that many of the most contentious issues that Stoughton has faced in recent history have been resolved, and the tempers that flew during some of the big box discussions have cooled. I feel that the council has focused on city issues as opposed to using the "soapbox" to advocate for unrelated other hot button issues. From my perspective this is good, as I am the product of a time when people were able to disagree amicably. Consensus building is very important to me. I am a center-right person who comes from a labor union left family, went to a university that is far to my left in a County that is far to my left. I feel confident in my ability to build consensus.

As an alder, my role would be to represent both my constituents and also make decisions that affect the city as a whole, regardless of affiliations or viewpoints. While it's important to take into account the opinions of my constituents, there may be times when my duty extends beyond following the majority opinion. In those situations, I would carefully weigh several factors before making a decision. My nature is to thoroughly research and analyze the issue, seeking input from subject matter experts and stakeholders. This would help me gain a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits, drawbacks, and long-term implications of the decision.

Additionally, I would actively engage in open and honest dialogue and encouraging direct communication through various channels. I would make every effort to explain the reasoning behind my position, listening attentively to their concerns, and being receptive to alternative viewpoints.

Ultimately, my decision would be based on a thoughtful evaluation of the available information, the potential impact on the city as a whole, and the principles and values that guide my representation. While it might not always align with the majority opinion, I would strive to make a well-informed decision that I genuinely believe is in the best interest of our city's long-term prosperity, even if it requires making difficult choices.

4) Council meetings are the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month. In addition, there are at least two standing committees you will be assigned to, as well as other meetings, correspondence and information needing your attention. Do you anticipate a problem in attending evening meetings or fulfilling other time commitments typical to the Alderperson's role.

In general, I don't feel this will be a problem, as my job is generally 9-5, and I do have the flexibility to work from home on occasion. I do have an annual conference in October that takes me out of town. My only concern is that I still desire to be active in Scouting, especially while my son is still

active, and Troop meetings are on Thursday nights. But I suspect that the Troop and my son will be amenable to me missing some to attend to city business. My son also plays football, so in the fall there may be some games that may interfere, depending on how much he plays on Thursday nights (Varsity Reserve) vs, Friday nights. I will have to take a look at that as the schedule becomes clearer but doubt it should pose a significant issue.