



2019 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

The Missoula Organization of REALTORS® is the voice of the Missoula real estate industry. Our more than 700 members would like to know your thoughts on important issues that affect them. We thank you for completing the survey.

MOR has endorsed candidates in past elections and may do so in these elections. If we consider an endorsement in your race, we may ask you and your opponent(s) to each meet with us for candidate interviews. Endorsement decisions are made by the MOR Board of Directors.

Please return the questionnaire by **Friday, July 26** to Dwight Easton at deaston@missoularealestate.com.

BACKGROUND

Name: Brent Sperry

Office You Are Seeking: City Council Ward #2

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CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION

Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number:

Max Bauer Jr, 5074 Gardner Ln, Florence MT 59833

Will you accept PAC contributions? Yes

ISSUES

- 1) Between 2014 and 2018 the median home price in the Missoula urban area increased 28.9% from \$225,000 to \$290,000. Over that same period, the median income for a four-person household in Missoula increased 8.6%, from \$64,800 to \$70,400; however, the affordability index declined from 122 to 93. As a result, homeownership is increasingly out of reach for many Missoula families. This rapid increase in home prices is primarily because of a shortage of homes in affordable price ranges. This shortage is due in part to increasing costs of land, lot development, infrastructure, and building costs. The City of Missoula Office of Housing and Community Development recently presented a city housing policy. The policy outlines several private and public sector

regulatory reform and development incentives. **As a member of the City Council which specific policy changes would you support?**

The only policy I somewhat agree with is to pursue changes to general land use codes that reduce development cost while maintaining community quality. I do not support any city subsidized, funded or incentivized programs. I believe this only magnifies the problem for homeowners/ tax payers that may be on the verge of being taxed out of their homes.

- 2) Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is a controversial policy tool some local governments have used to try to increase the supply of affordable housing. Essentially, a jurisdiction changes its zoning to require that a certain percentage of housing units within a proposed development be offered at below market price for lower income consumers. In some cases, the developer may be granted a density bonus or other regulatory incentives in return. Proponents argue that market-based incentives are not effective in creating affordable housing units and cities must mandate IZ to increase stocks. Critics say that while IZ may create affordable housing units for a few, the cost of these affordable units is transferred to consumers of market rate housing. Consequently, in the eyes of its critics, IZ may not help or may even worsen the housing affordability issue it was designed to address. **What is your opinion of inclusionary zoning and is it an appropriate policy tool for addressing Missoula's lack of housing affordability?**

I feel inclusionary zoning is essentially another forced subsidy. It has been proven time and again to not fix the low income housing problem and actually make it worse by driving up the cost of housing.

- 3) Physical and regulatory constraints on developable land including flood hazards, the Airport Influence Area, slopes greater than 25%, farmland of importance, public land, land under conservation easement, managed land, and developed land, leaves approximately 6% of land in and around the city that is suitable and capable for residential development. Providing over 60,000 jobs, Missoula is an employment anchor in western Montana, but a quarter of Missoula's workforce lives outside Missoula County. Having a large percentage of Missoula's workforce that commutes causes monetary and social costs. These costs include fuel and vehicle maintenance, road maintenance and replacement, congestion, pollution, long commute times, quality of life and community character, health and environmental concerns, and worker productivity. Further, it is estimated that the lost property tax from commuters who live outside of the county is approximately \$6.6 million per year. **As a member of the City Council, which specific policy changes, if any, would you support to increase development in Missoula?**

I believe a good start is to reduce the red tape for developers. I do agree with regulations and zoning but the city needs to make it easier for developers.

- 4) Property taxes are the primary source of funding for Montana cities. The City of Missoula's property tax rate has steadily increased since the end of the recession and recently Missoulians have expressed surprise at increases in property tax assessment values by the Department of Revenue. Consider the balance between providing services and infrastructure and city taxpayers' ability to pay. **In your opinion, has the City of Missoula struck the right balance?**

Absolutely not. As a homeowner I am pleased to see my valuations rise, as with most people my home is one of my largest investments. Citizens now get shocked when valuation rises because they are keen to the fact that a property tax will most likely follow. The city has multiple revenue streams and should manage their budget to fund necessities instead of luxuries. We do not have an income problem we have a spending problem. Lowering property taxes in the city would also go a long ways to bringing the commuters from question #3 back into the city as well.

- 5) City Council recently passed a resolution in support of Missoula County's federal BUILD grant application to help fund streets and infrastructure west of Reserve Street between Mullan and Broadway. Support for the resolution, at the committee level, was not unanimous and there was discussion regarding where development infrastructure should be targeted. **What is our opinion of the BUILD grant request and how much involvement do you believe the council should take in coordinating growth policy with the County?**

I believe the city and county should be collaborating on growth policy. Other organizations in Missoula such as MOR should also be involved. If there are clear communications along with stats it should be easy to predict where the growth is going to happen. I also think the city/county should work with State and Federal entities when possible to assist with infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to this questionnaire and if I can answer any more questions feel free to contact me at any time.

Brent Sperry