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Q1

Candidate Name

Sarina Gersher

Q2

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Q3

Ward 8

Ward/Constituency

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Q4

What do you envision the City's role to be in economic development?

Saskatoon plays a significant economic role across the province. It is important to continue supporting our economic pillars. Just this year, SREDA released Saskatoon's first economic growth strategy. I support the plan that has been prepared, and think it is relevant for implementation despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the specific areas that resonate with me include:

- supporting technology, innovation and entrepreneurship
- accelerating the growth of Indigenous leaders and businesses
- retention of local talent, and
- improving transportation options.

Continuing to work with our business community remains a priority in supporting economic development.

Q5

How can the City help businesses survive through the COVID-19 pandemic?

The City has played a multi-faceted role through the COVID-19 pandemic including being a convenor for key groups, running city operations and supporting economic recovery all while working not to pass on any additional costs related to COVID to residents. These roles will need to continue through the pandemic. Examples of support through a City lens included the waiving (and reimbursement in some cases) of parking fees, the waiving of parking patio fees for 2020/2021, an opportunity to set-up parking patios throughout winter, an extension on property tax and utility payments, and the Small Business Emergency Continuity Grant Program (developed through SREDA). It will be important to continue liaising with our business partners to understand the evolving needs and concerns throughout the recovery phase of COVID-19.

Q6

Crime and safety are key election issues. What is your plan to address these concerns, including your position on defunding the police?

In short, the current police service has a lot on their plates, including dealing with serious drug related crimes. The scope of the service has taken on a lot of crime that is linked to addictions and mental health. I believe we can come up with a more creative and supportive way to address the addictions and mental health issues that do not rely on the police to answer. An example of this is a new pilot project we have launched in the downtown (Sawêyihotân) which is being led by the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Q7

What are your priorities for major capital projects in Saskatoon?

There are many plans and projects underway and one thing I look forward to undertaking is a prioritization process for them. We have some projects that have been underway already (BRT) and some that are newer (Downtown Entertainment District). It would be important to see the full list of projects before making a decision.

Q8

Do you share the concerns many residents and businesses have regarding increased taxes and user fees?

Yes,

Please elaborate::

It is always a priority and goal to limit reliance on property taxes and utility costs through our budget cycle. I am always open to hearing further suggestions on new ways to reduce the reliance on mill rate.

Q9

What steps would you recommend the City take to curb or mitigate rising operational costs?

Without having a specific area for operational costs referenced in the question, it is difficult to provide a specific answer. Our operations are always under review to see if things can be done more efficiently. This is prepared at minimum in an annual report that talks about hard dollar savings (e.g. change in phone plans) to operational efficiencies (e.g. high speed roadway clearing). When issues are raised by community partners we also work at trying to address those in a meaningful way (e.g. infill roundtable).

2020 Municipal Election Candidate Questionnaire

Q10

If necessary, would you support any initiatives City Administration may take to freeze or even reduce staffing levels?

Please elaborate::

I have supported interim hiring freezes in the past and would consider it again if needed. A reduction of staffing levels most often comes with cuts in services or programs. I have not heard interest from residents in cutting services.

Q11

How do you believe that the City should spend COVID-19 relief money provided by the provincial or federal government? Do you believe that relief money should be spent in the area for which it is specified (e.g. infrastructure, etc.)?

It is important that we do the best we can not to pass down costs incurred as a result of COVID-19 to residents and businesses. In 2020 we are predicted to have a deficit of about \$14M as a result of COVID-19 to City operations. It is through City planning (e.g. temporary hiring freeze, discretionary spending freeze) and support from other levels of government that have allowed these expenses not to be passed onto residents or have services reduced. The impacts from COVID-19 will remain into 2021 and be felt longer than that. We will need to take a close look at budgets to ensure we are not incurring future deficits.

Q12

Do you believe the decision regarding the Main Library funding/debt should be revisited?

No,

Please elaborate::

In doing my best to be brief, City Council discussed the library's debt financing request at length last year. I supported this request as I believe the library prepared a strong business case about the need for a new space, their repayment plan and their expanded ability to offer the needed services of the library. The current building has some major deficiencies (like fire code concerns) and does not contain the space needed to meet ambitious accessibility standards.

Q13

What is your #1 priority on your election platform?

My platform has three priority areas:

Improving safety by ensuring our neighbourhoods are well maintained for all people and modes of transportation.

Strengthening our economy and environment by harnessing the skills and expertise of local businesses and organizations.

Engaging with neighbours in the ward by listening to your concerns, sharing important information and having open discussions.

Find more are www.sarinagersher.ca.
