

**As a candidate for city council, what are your top three priorities for the future of Waconia? How do you plan to address these priorities, and what specific actions will you take to ensure they align with the needs and aspirations of our community?**

**Jacob Coleman\* - Candidate: Waconia City Council**

As a candidate for City Council, my top three priorities for Waconia are smart growth, fiscal responsibility, and clear, open communication with residents.

**\*\*Smart Growth:\*\*** Waconia is growing, and it's essential that this growth is managed thoughtfully. I will advocate for development that enhances our community without compromising its charm or overwhelming our infrastructure. This means prioritizing projects that bring value, support local businesses, and preserving the character of our neighborhoods while ensuring that we have the necessary infrastructure in place to support growth.

**\*\*Fiscal Responsibility:\*\*** Managing taxpayer dollars wisely is a fundamental responsibility of the City Council. I will focus on ensuring that our budget reflects the priorities of the community and delivers the highest return on investment. By scrutinizing expenditures, avoiding waste, and prioritizing essential services and projects, I will work to keep Waconia on a solid financial footing.

**\*\*Clear and Open Communication:\*\*** Residents deserve transparency and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. I am committed to maintaining clear, open lines of communication with all members of the community. I will actively seek input, provide timely updates, and ensure that the decision-making process is accessible and understandable to everyone. This will include regular open office hours, enhanced digital communication, and outreach to ensure that all voices are heard.

By focusing on these priorities, I believe we can build a future for Waconia that honors our past while preparing for a prosperous and vibrant future.

**Jim Lohan - Candidate: Waconia City Council**

- A. Independence: The City of Waconia must remain sovereign and independent to maintain our unique culture. I will do everything in my power to ensure decisions made outside of our city are ONLY implemented if they benefit those of us living in Waconia.
- B. Safety: If elected, I will ensure the entire city of Waconia remains vibrant and safe. I plan to work with the city council to hold those who will profit from our growth and culture responsible for funding the appropriate traffic, parking and greenspace projects. Waconia is a haven for young and growing families, and I will work tirelessly to make sure all Waconia children feel safe riding their bikes and playing in our community.
- C. Stewardship: Our community has generously provided resources to our city for decades. I honor that generosity and pledge to help manage our financial, physical, and people assets as if they were my own.

**Simon Malinski - Candidate: Waconia City Council**

First we need to re-state city council exists to help set policy and, strive for a fair budget which is paramount in achieving long-term goals of Waconia.

- a. Establishing an annual budget is necessary to an effective city council and would be one of the largest

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and most important items for me as a council member

- b. Maintaining a fully engaged community is another area I would focus on by being present and visible to our residents. Transparency is a key factor in the trust of our local government. I have and continue to be active in community events throughout the year (National Night Out, Nickle Dickel Day, etc.)
- c. Managing the growth of Waconia is going to be supported by a strong local workforce and we need to be able to balance the desire to grow with our capabilities to deliver essential services. Waconia is a growing community, such growth comes with opportunities to address traffic, safety and local resources for the people who live here.

As stated above addressing an annual budget is paramount in our ability to achieve our goals. I will listen to and work with my colleagues, business owners, and residents to ensure we hear everyone and make the best decisions for our community. Fiscal responsibility needs to be accomplished.

Engagement with our community stakeholders is going to be important in giving everyone a voice. I will continue to be accessible, present and transparent within the community.

As Waconia grows, we need to ensure everyone has access to essential resources. We have a responsibility to address the needs not only of the new families moving to Waconia but the aging community.

### **Derek Siddons - Candidate: Waconia City Council**

1. Maintain a healthy thriving downtown while evolving the Hwy 5 corridor for a lasting future with smart infrastructure choices.
2. Strengthen partnerships with business & schools so we can bring more meaningful community projects to fruition. Ex: new baseball field. As we grow there will be more multi-funded projects that will benefit the schools, residents & businesses.
3. Rebrand the city. Increase communication to current residents. Develop a new brand identity to attract new business and residents. Continue to partner with build on the work the chamber does to bring the community together.

### **Tim Litfin - Candidate: Waconia Mayor**

How do you plan to address these priorities, and what specific actions will you take to ensure they align with the needs and aspirations of our community? When I talk to citizens of this great city, I hear many needs and wants. Here are some of the items I have heard most often when going door to door.

⇒ Property taxes are too high, and those high taxes are driving our senior citizens out of their homes. Our Waconia property taxes went up by 14% two years ago and 10% this past year per City Administrator Shane Fineran. I doubt wages went up by that percentage for most people in our community. Granted, there are years when a large investment is necessary by the city, but two large years of high back-to-back property tax increases is tough. Those increased do not help our senior citizens who are living on a fixed income and want to stay in their homes.

Listening and working with city staff at a higher level by the council to separate out wants and needs will help. We also need to open the doors to our community and listen more intently to how they want their tax dollars spent.

⇒ Infrastructure. Roads and trails and recreation enhancements. All need greater investment and maintenance. Roads and Trails. The city has a strategic maintenance and replacement plan. But that plan needs to be scrutinized. We have streets that have been in tough shape for years. Thankfully, our downtown area is seeing enhancements right now. However, there are ongoing issues with this construction project. Issues

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will happen with any project. The question is are we asking questions, are we listening, and are we acting on concerns?

We have had a growing base of nice trails in our community. They, too, need constant maintenance. That is normal but we must take care of our investment. An issue I hear regularly is that our trail system in Waconia does not connect outside of Waconia. I have been saying this for thirty years. Yet, today, we still do not have a trail that leads safely out of the city limits.

We need to collaborate at a higher level with Carver County on trail development so that together, the city can connect via hard surface trail to the Dakota Trail on the north side of Lake Waconia.

Recreation Enhancements. The game of Pickleball is on fire locally and across the country. It is a great game and a fun game. Waconia must keep pace with our citizens on this expressed need. I am glad to hear that a dedicated set of Pickle ball courts is planned near the ice arena. Consideration of converting one of the city tennis courts into a set of Pickleball courts is also a worthy discussion that we should be having.

All these things cost money, and the city cannot go alone. I have successfully worked with businesses on sponsorships and that can be part of the solution for projects like this. We need to investigate funding sources and consider naming rights as well to stretch the city's dollars.

⇒ Communicate to build trust. City communication needs to improve so that our citizens trust and have faith in this great city. Projects of any size and scope can take on a life of their own and change. This happened with the 2023 downtown project as well as with the current 2024 downtown project. You can talk to anyone who was affected in the downtown area the past two years with construction, and they will tell you stories of not hearing from the city, contractors going off script, or being told something that did not happen. Or that they were surprised with either an occurrence, the timeline, or the product. I know we can do better.

A few of my communication improvement priorities for the city are:

- Mayor Fridays. Every first Friday morning, I will either be at a senior center in town, or a local business, or at city hall conducting a listening session. We need to discuss city business with those who want to engage with us. We need to open our doors at a higher level to hear what our taxpayers are saying. Listening builds trust.
- The city should start a youth advisory council made up of high school students. We need to listen to our future leaders. This group could meet twice a year. I look forward to chairing this group. I have been working with students my entire career. Ideation is alive and well with our youth, all we need to do is engage them.
- When major projects are planned in our city, we need to have regular listening sessions and a formal door to door "how are we doing" campaign of those impacted by the project. This will build trust, and it will help make our end product better.
- City needs assessments or city-wide surveys should be done on a regular basis for any city or school. I am not sure when the last time this city conducted a formal survey, but it is time. I have broad experience in surveys.
- A friendlier environment at city council meetings when community members present, and share is necessary. This is also part of my communication improvement plan for the city. I have seen firsthand where visitors come before this council and are not welcomed or made to feel welcome. Citizens and other presenters may already feel anxious about presenting to the city council. It is our job to make them feel welcome. We need to compliment them for their willingness to share their time and ideas with us. I have presented to a minimum of 30 different city councils and school boards in my professional career. The environment and a welcoming feel make a big difference. This, too, builds trust with

the city.

- These communication improvements are low-hanging fruit for the most part and ideas that we can act on. I am excited about this list of communication and listening possibilities. I am confident that they will work.

### **Mayor Nicole Waldron\*- Candidate: Waconia Mayor**

As members of the Council, we are always looking to the future and working with staff to find solutions and strategies to accomplish our goals. I am proud to say that several of the actions needed to succeed are already in place. Although my list is longer than three, these are my top priorities:

#### 1) Grow Tax Base

Expanding our community, needs to include planned growth for commerce and industry. The Council has adopted the 10th Street Small Area Plan which includes commercial and light industrial zoning. When this property is brought into city limits this plan will provide vital information to prospective developers. In addition, we continue to assess utility needs to connect to the future industrial park. The Southeast Area Feasibility Plan, which was just adopted, will include information for transportation, water, sanitary sewer, stormwater and trail costs. This will help guide our investment decisions needed to support and develop growth in that area.

#### 2) Manage Infrastructure Maintenance

As Waconia continues to grow so does that amount of infrastructure we need to care for. Water and sewer inspections are performed on a routine basis and accesses. In addition, the Public Works department is in the process of completing a long-term pavement management plan. The department will be contracting with an artificial intelligence data collection firm to gather pavement condition information. This will allow the department to create a plan that manages both safety concerns and economic impact. Knowing where our greatest needs are throughout the city allows us to better plan for maintenance and replacement of our infrastructure.

#### 3) Guide and Support Redevelopment

Maintaining the small-town character of Waconia remains a priority. As Waconia flourishes and attracts redevelopment, we need to keep in mind that the goal is always to strengthen the downtown while preserving the charm. The council has created an Economic Development fund to help current and new local businesses with grants for exterior updates and startups. We will continue to develop incentives to attract the growth and development that best supports our city.

## CONTACT THE CANDIDATES

### Jacob Coleman

jacobpcoleman@gmail.com  
651-280-0772

### Jim Lohan

LohanforWaconia@outlook.com  
612-730-6927

### Simon Malinski

simon.malinski@gmail.com  
617-785-6431

### Derek Siddons

derek\_siddons@yahoo.com  
952-465-9469

### Tim Litfin

timlitfin2022@gmail.com  
612-910-6200

### Nicole Waldron

waldron4waconia@gmail.com  
612-503-9591

### How Can I Vote in Waconia?

City of Waconia residents have multiple options for voting:

1. Vote by mail.
2. Vote at City Hall, 201 South Vine Street (City of Waconia Residents Only).
3. Go to the Taxpayer Services Department at Carver County Government Center, 600 E. 4th Street, Chaska, (ALL Carver County Residents).
4. Vote in person on Election Day on November 5, 2024.



### Early and Absentee Voting at City Hall (Waconia residents only)

Early and absentee voting starts September 20 and goes through November 4. Waconia residents can vote at City Hall Monday - Thursday from 7:30 am - 4:30 pm, and Fridays from 7:30 am - 11:30 am. Extended hours include:

- Saturday, October 26 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 29 - 7:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 2 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 3 - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 4 - 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you are not a City of Waconia resident (but reside in Carver County) you can absentee vote at the Carver County Government Center in Chaska. Their hours are different than the hours listed above.

### How Do I Vote by Mail?

To request a mail ballot, please visit the [Secretary of State's Website](#) or [www.waconia.org/votebymail](http://www.waconia.org/votebymail).

### City of Waconia Polling Locations

The City of Waconia is no longer part of a Ward Boundary System. Your polling place may have changed in 2022. The City of Waconia is divided into three precincts, please view the polling places listed below. If you are unsure of the precinct in which you reside, please consult the [City of Waconia Precinct map](#) (link).  
[www.waconia.org/DocumentCenter/View/3042/WaconiaPrecincts](http://www.waconia.org/DocumentCenter/View/3042/WaconiaPrecincts)

#### Precinct 1

Faith Lutheran Church  
800 Waconia Parkway North  
Waconia, MN 55387

#### Precinct 2

Trinity Lutheran Church  
601 E. 2nd St.  
Waconia, MN 55387

#### Precinct 3

Waconia Ice Arena  
1250 Oak Avenue  
Waconia, MN 55387

Questions? Call City Hall at 952-442-2184

### Current Elected Officials

For a full listing of current city, county, state, and federal elected officials, visit [www.DestinationWaconia.org/live/#government](http://www.DestinationWaconia.org/live/#government).

