

MEET *Your* CANDIDATES



NEIL TUNMORE

Extra questions from City Council Candidate Forum

Do you feel that the city's "20 is Plenty" campaign has been effective at reducing speeding in neighborhoods? Why or why not?

“It is hard to comment and probably too early to tell on whether it is effective. I’m a number, data driven person and what I do know is the current council ignored the data coming from the city safety expert in deciding to go forward. We don’t have fatality or serious injury data that said we had a problem and our wonderful Police Department do not have resources to police the change. If I recall, 3 other cities changed to 20MPH and the average change was 0.1mph reduction in actual speed driven. Spending that cash seemed a bad decision when you review the data. I would rather have spent the money on new pathways.”

What are you doing as a candidate to inform yourself about community concerns and priorities? And how do you plan to stay informed over the next 4 years if you are elected?

“A comment from a local fire fighter hit me this week the most. He said “historically, candidates are keen to meet us during campaigning, then their phones don’t work once they are elected.” That’s not me. What I liked the most about my corporate job was meeting people, one on one, or in small groups and large groups. I love round tables where nobody is sitting at the head of a table and where people feel more relaxed to vent or ask questions or express opinions. A dais and a microphone is often intimidating to many people. I have been meeting with multiple people and groups including neighborhood associations, fire and police, chamber of commerce, lake corporation, friends, visitors, people on the streets. I have a published telephone number. It’s how you find out what’s really concerning people. But the real key is communicating both good news and the courage to tell people the truth about budgets and the need to set priorities. I plan to keep my boots on the ground, continuing to meet people but also canvassing residents to ensure the decisions we make on council are grounded in facts and not just emotion or politics.”

Parking around the high schools and some of the parks, especially George Rogers Park, has become a recurring problem for residents of nearby neighborhoods. How do you think the City should approach parking in these areas, and what role do you see for partnership with the Lake Oswego School District in shaping long-term solutions?

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“Remember I am person who makes decisions based on facts and data, especially when it comes to spending taxpayers hard earned money. Parking, like all city issues, should be addressed with a collective vision and outcome. Let’s get the people impacted together, review the data, then make sound decisions, recommend solutions and communicate in lay language why those decisions were made. We should build a priority list of parking problems and incorporate those into our budgets and priorities. So, where are the pinch points, how many cars do we need to accommodate, how often is it a problem, what possible solutions are there, what do they cost and then finally which solution do we prefer when balancing all those things? ”

With costs rising across the board and the city having raised utility rates in recent years, how do you weigh affordability issues for local residents with city infrastructure needs?

“Affordability” used to mean whether a person can pay for something without sacrificing essentials like housing, food, health care, childcare, emergencies, saving for retirement etc. Today “unaffordable” means that prices of everything have risen leaving too little future stable income after necessities are paid for. For City Council, one of the biggest problems on “affordability” is that we don’t want to make the tough decisions. We keep adding costs instead of balancing “needs vs wants”. Council members want to do the right thing and please everyone. That cannot be achieved, because the wants and needs will always be higher than the available budget. I think we must decide priorities and fund the highest priorities. That might also mean cutting programs to fund other items. Planning for the future is part of a councilors job. All “needs” get stacked against the budget and if the citizens “want” more then they and the city must decide how to fund things that are on their “wants” list.”

Lake Oswego is a predominantly white, aging community. Do you favor efforts to make it more diverse and, if so, how would you suggest we get there?

“I am a legal immigrant. Twenty six years ago I had a two-year assignment here and never left. I stayed because I felt welcomed, sensed opportunities here for me and my family. Of course, I favor a Lake Oswego that is welcoming for all, but you cannot tell white aging people to leave, and you cannot force anyone else to live here in their place. I’m all in favor of working to find solutions for people who do not feel welcome, so let’s review the data of those who feel unwelcomed, talk to them and find out how we rectify that. If we think “affordability is the issue – that’s a much harder nut to crack. The market determines what housing costs.”

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Lake Oswego's 460 acres of natural area parks and open space and 53 percent tree canopy are treasured assets and make LO one of the most desirable places to live. What would you do as a City Councilor to protect and preserve those assets?

There are current plans in place to protect these valuable assets and in the future, it will be all about balance. I do think we should balance tree protection with developers wanting to build more capability and housing in the city. Having said that I suspect the council will be under pressure to find space to build thousands of low cost/affordable units in Lake Oswego. We need to resist this being at the cost of our parks and open spaces that make LO the special place it is.

If you are elected to City Council, what are your highest priority issues that you believe the City Council should address?

"We need to make sure the large construction projects are managed well, come in under budget and push on being inside schedule. I'm already concerned we have signed a contract to build a wastewater plant at an agreed price before the design is done. That is a recipe for disaster. We need to prioritize spending while also balancing the needs of the city day to day. That means including the small things the city needs as well as the big things while not just increasing spending. It means prioritizing and making tough decisions on what not to spend.

Lake Oswego has some large scale projects on the horizon including the new wastewater treatment facility and a new public library. What are your thoughts about prioritizing major infrastructure projects both from a perspective of fiscal constraints and also the ability to manage these projects for success?

These sorts of decisions were my life in my profession for many years at Intel. You will always have more demands than budget. There is a process that can bring big projects in on schedule and within budget. It takes discipline, experience, strong project management, incredible contractor partnership and a strong back to say no to change and scope creep. It also requires experience and good research to help understand when something is too expensive. It requires innovation to define scope appropriately, so projects are not more expensive than they need to be but have the basic capabilities we want. It is already blowing my mind when I hear how much the new library will cost. I look forward to helping analyze costs for the value we get and to bringing different ideas to the table and working with open minds that embrace all views.