

ope! publishing presents



For eyes

February 2021

MEET THE 2021 MAYORAL CANDIDATES



**ZINE
FREE**



For eyes

February 2021

SPRING PRIMARY

Tuesday, February 16

Early voting February 2–12

Mon., Tues., Thur., Fri.: 10 am–2 pm
(Friday, February 12 only: 9 am–5 pm)

SPRING ELECTION

Tuesday, April 6

For information about registering to vote, absentee voting, polling places, and sample ballots go to:

cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/departments/city-clerk/elections-and-voting

Check your voting status at:
myvote.wi.gov

The contents of this publication can be found for free on our website: ope.pub/mayor
There you will find all of the candidate responses, as well as PDFs for your own printing and distribution. While Ope! Publishing owns the copyright, printing and sharing of this publication is encouraged. We ask only you don't alter the layout or words in any way. Otherwise, have at it!

Go to our website for what you need:

ope.pub/mayor

This year has brought candidates out of the woodwork and new blood to the political grind, and we at Ope! felt the urge to insert ourselves in the scene, in our own Ope! way. Last year, we took a stab at an offshoot zine series called Four Eyes, but we've not had a follow-up issue, until now. So here it is, in all its local, political, democratic glory. We sent the four I's (**Inspiration, Indignation, Inception, and Intention**) to each of the ten candidates, giving them free rein to respond to those four sentiments however they chose. Our hope is that these responses will illuminate the candidates from a lesser-viewed angle; think of it as refracted light on a blind spot. One of these ten people (a few didn't respond) will represent our city, our interests, our voice. So the more light cast on this election, the less chance of getting left in the dark. So get out there, get informed, get involved, and then vote like this shit means something. Because it does.

Rachel MacFarland
Co-publisher and Curator

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KATHERINE BLANCHARD

CURRENTLY: OWNER/STYLIST CHATTY KATHI'S HAIR SALON

FACEBOOK: Katherine-Blanchard-for-Mayor-106169121409009



I have some great ideas that I would love to see come to **INCEPTION** to help out the homeless population find solutions to their needs. I also want to help small businesses navigate the various laws and ordinances that you aren't even aware you need until after you've opened for business.

My **INTENTION** is to be open and approachable to the citizens of LaCrosse to work together as a team to solve issues and to make our town more inclusive.

Thank you.

Hello my name is Katherine Blanchard and I have lived in LaCrosse my entire life. I'm married (to Steve), and have 2 sons (Max and Remy). I am owner/stylist at CHATTY KATHI'S HAIR SALON on the Northside of LaCrosse.

My **INSPIRATION** for my mayoral run is that I always tell my children BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE. There's no better way than to get involved and try to make my town better.

I feel **INDIGNATION** regarding the perception that a regular working-class person would not be able to run this city well. I feel that it's time that people like me are represented and bring a new perspective to the job.

MARTIN E. GAUL

CURRENTLY: PRESIDENT OF CITY COUNCIL,
REPRESENTING DISTRICT 11

WEBSITE: gaulformayor.com



INSPIRATION

My inspiration to run for Mayor is my desire to help the City of La Crosse in a time of transition. From a period of relative stability in City government, with a two-term Mayor and an experienced Council, we go forward with a newly elected Mayor, a new Council President, and a Council with six new members of thirteen, and possibly a majority. Having served as Council President for the past 4 years, which afforded me the opportunity to work closely with our current Mayor, I believe I can help with that transition.

INDIGNATION

I am indignant over the current state of politics at every level of government. There isn't a lot we can do as individuals on a day-to-day basis. However there is something I can do in my campaign for Mayor. As such I made the decision to self-finance my campaign. I will not solicit nor accept donations at least through the primary in February, and hopefully not at all. My campaign for the most

part is based on word of mouth, depending on folks doing their research as to who can best do the job at this critical time. Bottom line, I'd like to earn your vote, not buy it.

INCEPTION

If elected, from the inception of my administration I will always look to do what's right for the City of La Crosse. I am seeking this job during a period of transition; transition in city government, transition from the crisis of COVID, and transition in society. I believe of those running for the position, my city government and life experience enables me to best navigate us through this interesting time. Going forward from that point of view, I presume I will be a one-term Mayor. As such, decisions will be made on merit, not in service to an interest group nor with an eye to the next election. Working with the entire City Council, I will always advocate from that perspective.

INTENTION

It is my intention, If elected, to work closely with the entire Council, current and new members, to build consensus and cohesion for the benefit of the City, bringing the same principles that have guided my time as Council President to the Mayor's office. In addition, I intend to actively engage with neighboring communities in exploration of partnership opportunities and regionalization when possible to improve overall resource utilization and levels of service. Working with La Crosse County, the City should take the lead with our willingness to break down long standing barriers to regional progress, beginning with developing trust among local elected officials.

Thanks for the opportunity.

MARTIN E. GAUL

JOE KONRADT

CURRENTLY: RETIRED BANKING EXECUTIVE

WEBSITE: JoeForMayor.us

INSPIRATION

I am inspired by the beauty of our City. Living here, we can easily forget how beautiful our community is. We need to look at our river and bluffs as if for the first time to really appreciate what we have. We also need ensure that everyone finds La Crosse to be the safe and inclusive place to live and raise their families that we have enjoyed. Anyone who has lived in La Crosse knows these feelings. How do we ensure that years from now, everyone in our community reflects back on their lives in our City the same way?

INDIGNATION

Feeling safe and included is a basic need we all have. Recent events have focused attention on disparities in our society. A feeling is a very personal thing. A collection of our experiences and perceptions accumulate into a perception or feeling. In the case of safety, a closely related aspect is a sense of fairness. Sadly recent events as geographically close as Minneapolis and Kenosha have erupted into a visceral response to a feeling of unfair treatment.

Well before I made the decision to enter the race for Mayor of La Crosse, I decided to take action as a citizen of La Crosse to directly address this issue. I approached the La Crosse Police Department to help get state of the art police cameras, and ensure that the video was accessible. As chance would have it, I learned that the department was within days of receiving a matching grant from the Department of Justice.

Every dollar we raise will be matched by the DOJ, and La Crosse is leading a group of seven local police departments to all buy new cameras that will work in unison when reacting to a call. Police officers are excited to get the new equipment to show their good work, and the District Attorney will have immediate access to the video each day so community members are assured of transparency.

INCEPTION

La Crosse has been a center for trade for more than a thousand years. The confluence of two major rivers, the Mississippi and the Black, led to large gatherings for both trade and competition. The very name of our City was taken from the game La Crosse that was played on this plain between our picturesque bluffs and beside these mighty rivers.

La Crosse continued to grow until 1960. Since that time the population in the City has hovered around 50,000 while the surrounding communities have continued to grow.

The only way to address ever increasing tax rates is to grow the tax base. The City of La Crosse needs to be as investor friendly as we can to increase taxable properties. We have a once in a lifetime opportunity with the 56-acre Mobil Oil site, to have a significant impact on taxable property. We need to ensure that each square foot of land is developed to its highest potential to increase tax income to the City. We cannot afford more non-taxable development.

Second, City of La Crosse residents cannot keep paying for facilities that benefit the entire area. La Crosse residents pay for the La Crosse Center, the Airport, the streets and infrastructure that people use to get to work, to shop, or to enjoy our beautiful river front and bluffs. Yet no one else helps pay for it.

INTENTION

The greatest obstacle to success is good intentions. Most people mean well, most people want to help, most people intend to help, but not enough people actually help.

My greatest frustration with the local leaders in La Crosse, has been a lack of action. Everyone seems to be going through the motions, or spouting wonderful "feel good" ideas that don't go anywhere.

Over my 35-year banking career, I have inspired growth and innovation. During my leadership of First Federal of La Crosse's retail banking we grew from seven branches to 70 in three states, mostly by opening new locations and growing from nothing into profitable locations with good jobs. This came through innovation and relentless attention to the details that drove success.

Read Joe's full submission on our website: ope.pub/mayor

JOE KONRADT

VICKI MARKUSSEN

CURRENTLY: FOUNDER, ENGAGE GREATER
LA CROSSE

WEBSITE: vickiformayor.us



INSPIRATION

The challenges in life are never ending. When our community struggles collectively, it is the role of the mayor to provide inspiration—a vision of what the world looks like beyond that struggle if we endure. The Mayor’s job is to cast an inspiring vision that causes all in the City to elevate beyond what was thought possible. My vision for the City is to be a consistently acclaimed place to work, live and play. It is measured in our quality of life (ex. amenities, commute times, safety, culture, health care), cost of living (ex. housing and food costs), educational and job opportunities.

INDIGNATION

By the time someone feels indignation, the problem has already occurred. An expectation was not met. Emotions have taken over and require extra effort to scale back to remove resentment. The Mayor walks into many situations where indignation exists through no fault of her own. The anger accumulated over years. “Government” and

“politics” that are the backbone of our incredible nation are now dirty words because of indignation. Trust has eroded. The Mayor cannot fix all levels of indignation, but the local path forward must involve listening and understanding how the misconnection occurred by all involved. There must be agreement that working together is the best path forward. The best path ensures the same circumstances do not happen again, with acknowledgement that the journey will have successes and failures, and all remain committed to change.

INCEPTION

Inception is exciting. It is the birth of something new with unknown yet to unfold. For the City of La Crosse right now, we will emerge from the pandemic. How we interact and what we see will not be the same. The Mayor must guide the City by turning challenges into opportunities. Inception is inevitable when disruption to our lives occurs. Human nature finds ways to create new beginnings. One thing I know about this community, it is eager to create opportunities together. We will find them.

INTENTION

Intention is too often used past tense when something goes awry, “My intention was...” It represents the silent thoughts that went unspoken—the planning, the process, the action plan never voiced until after the fact. In government, “unintended consequences” occur too often. The Mayor must ensure enough people are aware of proposed changes and the key stakeholders are brought into the conversation. Government may not have the best answer and must be open to outside ideas. Identifying the problem to be solved, then circling back to ensure the solution is not too broad is necessary.

VICKI MARKUSSEN

JESSICA OLSON

CURRENTLY: COUNCIL WOMAN REPRESENTING DISTRICT 8, MANAGER, OLSON APARTMENTS

WEBSITE: jessicaformayor.com



INCEPTION

One of the most enjoyable moments in being on the Council is being part of the inception of dreams; people seeking permits, licenses, or rezoning to launch a new business. The newly minted business owners come to our public hearings with a contagious sense of pride, optimism, and excitement. La Crosse, like any community, relies on the entrepreneurial ingenuity of our people to forge a strong economy. Our resiliency and inventive spirit will generate our renewal in the months and years to come. My favorite part of being on the Judiciary and Administration committee was to hit the microphone button, not to ask a pointed question, but to thank the applicant for taking a risk to invest in our community and wish them success in their new endeavor. I love being cheerleader for others, and I know that's what we need as a Mayor right now.

INDIGNATION

Our closed sessions on City Council take place in the South conference room, a room with black wood walls, ancient light blue carpet, and shrill

fluorescent light. The City staff lines up against the north wall with deadpan stares and armfuls of documents. We talk about confidential information. The environmental sins of past generations sometimes come up for discussion.

The odd quirkiness of the conference room causes me to mentally time travel to the edge of the marsh circa 1950s. I imagine standing in front of the Myrick gun club shelter, watching them shoot clay pigeons over the marsh. Nothing seems wrong to them. Indignation flares up in my mind wanting to scream at them to stop. As my mind returns to the room I suddenly wonder what environmental wrongs we are committing right now that the Council Members of the future will feel indignation about...

INSPIRATION

The marsh is the crown jewel of La Crosse. Our past, present, and future is irrevocably interwoven with this bounty of nature, and it will always remain misunderstood, and will always be under threat. When I need to feel inspired, I visit the marsh.

The Mississippi River glitters at night, watching from Pettibone beach in the summer, gently hiding terrible secrets under shallow waves. This mighty stream of water will outlive all of us, and we are each nothing but a passing presence in its midst.

The bluffs stand as sentinels over us every day, shifting their natural beauty with the changing seasons. Some of us have forgotten to look up at them once in a while. We, in La Crosse, have an entire compass direction that looks like a painted picture, no matter where you live in the City. We have much to be thankful for.

INTENTION

Roads to somewhere are paved with good ones. La Crosse politics is a bumper car arena of good intentions, there's so many of them they never seem to stop colliding with one another. Elected officials learn quickly that it's about traffic control, not driver's tests. Everyone, with remote and minuscule exception, has good intentions. The challenge is to harmonize divergent opinions without diluting substance and identity.

JESSICA OLSON

MITCH REYNOLDS

CURRENTLY: MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS
AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT, WISCON-
SIN-BASED WHOLETREES STRUCTURES

WEBSITE: mitchreynolds.com



INSPIRATION

My wife has spent the majority of her adult life teaching and coaching. Not as a profession. Just for the love of helping people of all ages grow through gymnastics, yoga and other fitness classes. The pandemic and resulting shutdown made much of that activity impossible. At least initially. But she knew others were struggling. So, she improvised. She engaged a group of women to come for early morning, outdoor classes on Wednesday mornings. And driveway yoga on Sunday mornings. She volunteered the instruction. Those fitness classes have continued outdoors on Wednesdays—and now Fridays—since the spring. Every week. Regardless of weather. For one session, several days ago, these warriors started working out in the dark when the temperature read 3°. They are all stronger now. In mind and body, for certain. But in community as well.

INDIGNATION

As I write this today, I am hoping that La Crosse police can find and arrest the man who is responsible for brutally beating my close relative. The alleged perpetrator has a prior conviction for the same thing. He may be arrested this time. But I know he will abuse again. Maybe someone I love. Maybe another. But someone. So, I struggle. Not with the lack of punitive measures that our system imposes on such perpetrators—mostly men. More, I seethe with the knowledge that our society tacitly condones this behavior through silence and acceptance. And that we must host bake sales and fundraisers for the organizations that bring healing and hope to the women who suffer this abuse.

INCEPTION

Bricks. Not even bricks, really. Pavers. But they looked like bricks. Bricks that were set twenty-five years ago into La Crosse sidewalks in a downtown that was eliciting a boozy sigh of resignation after losing shoppers to strip malls and residents to twindos and ranch homes. Bricks. Thousands of aggregate blocks pressed into sand, lining downtown streets. Lights, too. And decorative poles from which banners could hang and displays could glitter. And then people came. To live. And to shop in stores opening doors with a vibrancy that had been lost for decades. And they danced. In the streets. The music was live. But first came the bricks. We need more of those. More bricks. And then more dancing.

INTENTION

It's still there in the La Crosse city municipal ordinances. Chapter 44, Section 75. Cruising. An ordinance adopted in 1994 by the La Crosse city council in order to combat driving around Riverside Park too many times in a row. It came after stories about families afraid to go to the park because of cars cruising with loud stereos. The cruising ordinance was born. The rule defied enforcement. It required police to keep tabs on whether the same car passed by the same spot three times in two hours for no apparent reason. But it did provide another avenue for police to stop mostly young men who were driving at night. Young men of certain demographics, especially.

MITCH REYNOLDS

SAMUEL SCHNEIDER

CURRENTLY: OWNER OF ALL AROUND
CLEANING CREW

FACEBOOK: Samformayor21



INCEPTION

La Crosse is at a crossroads. Two futures are open to us. We have a choice for a beautiful future, a rebirth from the calamity of COVID. We can continue to be comfortable in the path the city has taken, or be bold, and act on the desires of the people for a future that reflects our vision. A future where we can build on the good that has been done, while improving that which is lacking in our city.

INTENTION

My intention is to represent, to serve, to be the voice of the voiceless. My mindset is to be accessible, to be empathetic, to be mindful of the needs of those we represent. My goal is to be a mirror of the needs of those we seek to lead and to love the city with the same passion as those who I serve and of those who have come before me.

Samuel Schneider

INSPIRATION

Hiking on a cool summer day. Paddling a canoe down the calm river. Laying on the grass and soaking in the summer sun. The nature of La Crosse inspires me, giving me a sense of responsibility, pride and joy to live here. We are the guardians of this land, the headwaters of the Mississippi.

INDIGNATION

The people of La Crosse are upset, and concerned. Property taxes are too high for many, and poor roads frustrate many more of them as well. My friend was stuck by a dirty needle in a park. Safety is a top issue for most of the people of this city. I am a reflection of their concerns; they deserve to be voiced, and heard properly.

CHRISTOPHER JON STOLPA

CURRENTLY: BUSINESS OWNER

WEBSITE: stolpa4mayor.net



INSPIRATION

1 : an inspiring agent or influence

2a : the quality or state of being inspired

b : something that is inspired

My thoughts:

The people of La Crosse inspire me to run for mayor. I get inspired by them, because they believe in me. I think to inspire someone, you must do things without reward. You should always be looking for a way to better a situation if you want to inspire. To inspire is not a gift; it is a way of life. Inspiration can be done daily, one positive action at a time.

INDIGNATION

1: anger aroused by something unjust, unworthy, or mean

My thoughts:

Overuse of police power and resources is one of the first things that comes to mind. When big business is constantly given large bailouts; yet, our small businesses suffer; that also comes to mind. Racial injustice and inequality should be the second definition.

INCEPTION

1: an act, process, or instance of beginning

My thoughts:

I hope to start a lot of community programs including: affordable housing, government transparency, police monitoring, improved counseling. I feel I can bring a whole new beginning to La Crosse, one of equality and honesty.

INTENTION

1: what one intends to do or bring about

My thoughts:

My intentions could not be more clear. This is best answered by visiting my website stolpa4mayor.net.

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