

**ST. PAUL TRADES AND LABOR ASSEMBLY
2007 CITY COUNCIL
CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Briefly answer the following questions and return to the Assembly Office prior to your appointment. Consider your answers carefully; they are in integral part of your record.

1. Why are you seeking St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly's Endorsement?

Organized labor is a vital part of our economy and society, a force to balance the power of corporations and the narrow interests that often control them. A key dimension of unions' power is their willingness to get involved in politics, supporting candidates who will protect the interests of workers, and lobbying government to choose policies that help working families.

In Maplewood we currently have a council majority that is often hostile to unions. This council majority and their city manager have actively worked to undermine unions and workers' rights.

After city department heads and other managers petitioned to form a bargaining unit last year, the city manager announced a reorganization that effectively demoted everyone who was a member of a bargaining unit or union, by creating a new layer of managers above them. His original draft said the reorganization was needed, "given the action by department heads to vote to form a labor bargaining group in October 2006." This language was quickly edited when observers noted that it appeared retaliatory on the face of it. Around the same time, the city manager rewrote the city employee handbook in an effort to allow more city staff to be fired without requiring cause.

The city's Human Resources director, who had led the formation of the Maplewood Confidential & Supervisory Association, was fired last August. In the report that was used to justify her firing, there were numerous comments criticizing her performance on the grounds that during her

tenure, negotiations with city unions resulted in agreements without ever having to go to arbitration. In effect, her ability to help create a cooperative environment with city employee unions was seen by this council majority as a major flaw.

I would seek the endorsement of labor in any case, but this year I believe the anti-labor forces in city hall make it especially important that I win your help in shifting the balance on the Maplewood City Council so that we can begin repairing some of this damage that has been done.

2. a) Who is your source of information on labor related issues?

To be honest, I have had little direct experience with unions, having spent my entire working life self-employed. Three major sources of information about unions recently have been my brother-in-law who is a flight attendant for American Airlines and has been very active in that union; Bob Monette of the Carpenters' union, whom I met in the audience of a city council meeting last year, who has met with me and given me some education about organized labor; and Progressive Majority (as a member of their "farm team," I've been the grateful recipient of their advice and education). I think I have a positive attitude toward labor, but recognize that I have quite a lot yet to learn.

b) Do you have a labor representative involved in your campaign? If so, who?

Mr. Monette has been a valuable continuing source of information about union issues. Two other individuals with strong union ties who have given me encouragement and advice are Jerry Hanson of the Pipefitters and former State Rep. Scott Wasiluk. I was just endorsed by AFSCME, and I look forward to their members' involvement with my campaign and as a resource for education about labor issues.

c) Will you acknowledge labor's endorsement on your literature, lawn signs, etc.?

Yes.

d) Will you have an open door policy with labor representatives from each sector?

Yes.

3. What will your top 3 priorities be as you take office?

- (I) Initiate a proper search for a qualified, professional city manager with appropriate experience and education to manage a city of Maplewood's size.
- (II) Reestablish an environment of mutual respect and openness in city hall. Employees who are afraid they can lose their jobs by doing them well, can't be expected to do their best work.
- (III) Evaluate issues that come before the council with an eye to fiscal responsibility. This doesn't mean blindly cutting taxes; it means making decisions with a long-run perspective. Sometimes spending more to invest in quality on the front end (for example,

by spending more to hire well-qualified, highly trained individuals to perform a job and do it right the first time) saves money in the end.

4. How would you handle all of the different interests that arise in a large building project?

I would be concerned with complying with the law, serving the general good of the residents of Maplewood (present and future), and serving the broader public good beyond that. I look forward to a strong relationship with organized labor, so that I will understand your point of view when weighing decisions that come before the council.

5. What ideas do you have to attract manufacturing to your city?

I think government's role is to create an environment that is broadly supportive of business and entrepreneurialism. For example, smart investments in infrastructure and robust city services benefit all current and potential businesses (as well as residents). Strategic support of affordable housing in our community means a healthy pool of workers and consumers available to local businesses. Consistency in the application of city policies and ordinances provides the predictability and rule of law that allows businesses to plan with confidence. I am leery of government choosing individual businesses to support, and I would not want to get lured into the kinds of bidding wars that we sometimes see communities engaging in to lure a business with offers of tax breaks and other special treatment.

6. What is your understanding of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) and do you support PLAs on City, HRA and PED funded projects?

PLAs seem like a good idea, to standardize policies for all of the different workers involved in a construction project and to limit labor-related delays. I would like to learn more about them and their role in decisions that will come before the city council.

7. Do you support prevailing wages on city-funded jobs? Why?

Yes. I think it is reasonable for the government to attach conditions to serve the public good when it is providing public funding. The city can effectively encourage contractors to use local labor; without prevailing wage, contractors have an incentive to bring in lower-wage workers from elsewhere. Local labor means that the public money invested in the job is reinvested in the community (those workers buy housing, goods, services, pay taxes, etc.).

8. What is your philosophy around development and what kind of development would you propose for your city?

I think we need to seek a balance in development. The demographers tell us we need a lot more senior housing, but I think we should be wary of putting that housing far away from commerce and services, for example. Attractive senior housing should allow an aging population to remain in or near their long-time neighborhoods, and will then free up housing stock there for younger families. I think affordable housing is very important, and the city should look favorably upon

opportunities to expand it; in this regard, I spoke out in favor of the development proposed for St. Paul's Monastery at a recent city meeting.

We also need to consider development in light of environmental issues, and pursue smart growth approaches where appropriate, to preserve natural features and resources for our quality of life and our health. Development plans that can reduce the use of automobiles (access to mass transit, proximity to jobs and shopping, etc.) should be encouraged whenever possible.

9. What is your opinion of privatization of city services and is there a situation that privatization is necessary?

I do not see any current city function that would benefit from contracting out or privatization. On the contrary, I think we have gone too far by outsourcing Human Resources, for example.

While as an entrepreneur I am enthusiastically capitalist and recognize the value of the free market, I think it's just a practical fact that government is the most effective vehicle for the delivery of certain services, for both cost and quality. I think we run into trouble when we allow blind allegiance to an ideology (such as the belief in privatization as the cure for all ills) to dictate policy.

10. Do you believe that Maplewood workers should get a COLA increase each year? Please explain why or why not. If so, where will you find the needed funding for COLA increases?

I support the principle that wages of city employees (and private employees too, for that matter) need to increase to keep pace with inflation. I am concerned about doing it by means of an automatic, inflexible mechanism. There is more to compensation than wages, and part of inflation includes those rising benefit expenses. For example, the CPI includes health care costs, which has been rising much faster than inflation at large in recent years. I would not want to be in a position where the city has to lay off employees or slash benefits in order to keep up with rigidly prescribed wage adjustments.

In terms of the source of funding, the same inflationary pressures should generally apply to revenue sources, such as property values and fee income.

11. There is concern about the direction of city government in Maplewood. Please explain how you would work to create a respectful tone between the city council and mayor, the city manager, citizens and city workers.

We can show respect for the city's staff first of all by giving them a city manager whose competence and professionalism at least matches their own. We must restart the search for a professional city manager with the appropriate qualifications and experience. This process needs the active participation of all stakeholders, including citizens, staff, other members of the community (such as local business owners who may not reside in Maplewood), as well as the council.

One of the things I will look for in a city manager is how she or he places him or herself in relation to the city employees and the council. A city manager is accountable to the council, and part of the job is to take flak directed at staff, and to defend the staff. Public scapegoating of subordinates is inappropriate.

The council also needs to lead by example when it comes to respecting staff. It is possible to ask questions and even disagree with the recommendations of city staff without putting them down or impugning their expertise or professionalism. I am outraged by the present council majority's behavior in this regard. I've seen them berate and criticize individual staff members in open council meetings and to the media; I've also seen them sit passively by or even encourage citizens to attack city staff during public meetings. The council majority and their city manager have encouraged citizen hostility in both overt and subtle ways.

Fostering an environment of mutual respect goes directly to my campaign theme of good government. When I speak to fellow Maplewood residents, I try to explain the cost we citizens pay for letting our council create an environment of hostility and disrespect. The city has lost too many experienced, gifted employees because of the toxic, demoralizing work environment that this council majority has created.

13. What in your view is the role of the City Council and the city government in general in promoting public education and the overall general welfare of our children?

Tax Base – the city council makes decisions that affect the community's taxable land values, which has a direct effect on school funding that comes through property taxes.

Safety – The city needs to maintain strong fire and police protection, and make infrastructure decisions that complement the schools and the needs of children.

Affordable Housing – Affordable housing is vital to help working families (and the environment, by helping people live closer to where they work and play, thus reducing travel, urban sprawl, and so forth), especially in the twin cities housing market. We need to offer families the tools to achieve their own success.

Parks and Recreation – Maplewood has long taken pride in our parks, open spaces, and recreation programs, with summer programs in particular that benefit children and compliment the work of the schools. I disagree with the present council majority's decision to eliminate the Parks & Recreation Department and divide its functions between Public Works and the city clerk's department.

14. Do you support collective bargaining?

Yes.

15. Will you respect the right of workers to form and join unions?

Yes.

16. What would you see your role as a city council member in helping workers organize a union at their work place?

I'm not sure, except to say that I support the right to unionize and I think that as a nation we would be economically and socially stronger if the trend of declining union membership were reversed. Certainly the city can lead by example, by highlighting the positive role of the unions and bargaining units in its own labor force, and working with them as a partner rather than an opponent.

17. As a city council person, what would be your philosophy around Proprietary Interest Protection Agreements (PIPA) and Labor Peace Agreements and how would you see them applied on city-funded projects?

I am concerned about the use of intimidation, delays, and other unfair tactics that keep workers from choosing freely whether or not to organize. I'd like to learn more about PIPAs and Labor Peace Agreements to see how they can be used to protect workers' rights.