

MPLS Park Board Questionnaire

Introduction:

Our population is aging, both in Minneapolis and nationwide. People over 60 now comprise more than 25% of the Minneapolis population, and people over 65 comprise nearly 11%. As part of this significant demographic, the Minneapolis DFL Senior Caucus is concerned about issues that affect the general community as well as issues that pertain specifically to them.

District Sought, or At-Large

MPRB District 1

Candidate Name

Dan Engelhart

Candidate Email

danielengelhart@gmail.com

Candidate Phone

612 805 1415

Manager

prefer campaign director as title- Alyssa Thompson

Manager email

alycat820611@gmail.com

Manager phone

6122274975

1. Based on the mission of the Park Board, what are three to five long- and short-term priorities for the Park Board?

They are on my website- Core Union Values brought to the workforce including all labor relations and accountability, Environment, in District 1 it's the Above the Falls Plan/River First yet intergovernmental and all resources to climate change impacts, Programming to meet all ages, abilities and identities and working within the full service community schools model.

2. Natural areas are important ecologically and for the physical and emotional health of city residents. Sports and other activities are important for all ages, providing healthy activities. How would you balance these important missions?

This specific question seems to me to address open space and maintenance of sports, the Hiawatha Golf Course situation needs more challenging conversations for example and to stop the pumping- it is clearly not sustainable on any level. Use of Pesticides and other harmful sports/activities related practices needs to be changed in every way possible to limit or stop environmental harm (s). In regard to budget priorities I believe that needs to be approached from the lens of abundance, we can get more funding if that is the need. We have to be more effective of telling the story of why we need funding for programming and the natural environment.

3. Describe how taxation is balanced between the city and the park board and how you would protect the park board's ability to fund its mission.

Funding is more complex than City to MPRB- the Park Board sets the budget and the City allocates off the levy- We need to tell the story of why the funding is needed and for what far more effectively. We need to engage at all levels of government. State LGA funds and Bonding is always a challenge for Minneapolis and part of that is organizing, part of that is message. I would work with the relationships I have and build from them, with community as an organizer- I am connected to all levels of government and have been for years.

4. What is your vision for the future use of our parkways?

This is quite complex- generally on the broadest of terms I feel we need to embrace urbanism and move away from an automobile dominated culture and transportation. This has to be part of a larger plan that does address accessibility and mobility for all. I served on AFCAC and was part of the conversation and community meetings around the Upper Harbor Terminal- the arguments made for the road going right up to the river to me need to be understood and dealt with in a respectful way yet that is not what we should be doing with completely new infrastructure. Parkway are at this point major thoroughfares and can really limit the park experience with the car traffic and the significant non point solution. Other than the auto issues with parkways events like Live on the Drive in North Minneapolis and other events that use the Parkway space for people we need to strive for as much as possible. Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety has to be paramount and other ways of moving people that work for them.

5. It's easier to get capital funds than maintenance funding. How would you balance preserving existing park assets versus new projects?

I'm very familiar with this challenge as I do represent the DNR with MAPE- Advocating and organizing to protect via Asset Preservation is key, it's a travesty when existing infrastructure is not maintained and sometimes ends up unsafe or in need of being shut down with no plan or funding to replace it. I would fiercely advocate for infrastructure to be maintained, this is an issue for the park user, the workers and all involved.

6. Will you make clean water a priority? What must be done to stop lake eutrophication and keep our creeks and the river clean?

Yes! this is one of our highest needs and one of my highest priorities. I began my career as an organizer on Water Quality issues in New Jersey- This situation is complex as Climate change is a larger issue than the Park Board can directly impact yet we can do far better, we can move from carbon offsets to truly limiting and movement to carbon zero within the parks, we have to be honest about the sources of eutrophication, Fertilizers and to some extent pesticides, working across government and with community partners to address runoff and storm drains. Big structural fixes are needed and work with watershed orgs to do everything possible with MPRB jurisdiction and education and incentives for adjacent or problematic properties to clean up. I got E coli from swimming in Cedar Lake, I'd sure like that to not happen for anyone, blue green algae is terrifying and obviously all the invasives and the havoc they create need to be addressed. There are success stories in MN and I want MPRB to be a success story on our challenge here.

7. What can the Park Board do to maintain existing tree canopy and increase the total canopy, alone and in partnership with the City, County and Met Council?

The 2040 plans goals and mission need to be championed- Develop and implement strategies and quantifiable goals to increase the tree canopy including exploring an expansion of funding and incentives to plant and promote species diversity while retaining and protecting existing trees.

Provide education and training on tree care for all residents.

Ensure a healthy tree planting environment in the right of way by increasing growing space, and maintain its quality by relocating utilities to avoid conflicts.

Explore incentives, programs, and requirements for new developments and additions to existing buildings to retain mature trees, replace lost trees, and plant more trees if none were there originally.

Require new developments to preserve existing mature trees in the public right of way where feasible and reasonable.

We need to have the best research on trees that will work well in our urban environment and the rapidly changing climate- we need to plant everywhere that is public park board land. We also need committed local residents to keep the newly planted trees watered or if not possible park staff must do that. I see trees that are dying due to this on a regular basis.

8. Have you served as a board member in any organization previously? How do you balance a board member's oversight role and community advocacy versus letting professional staff manage the organization?

Yes- I am a public sector Business Agent with MAPE so I respect public servants and their role at the highest possible level. I have been on AFCAC (above the falls community advisory committee) which worked very closely with city and MPRB staff. I have been on the OPEIU Local 12 board which is an entirely different dynamic in the labor management relationship. I understand the board has power over yet the management needs to be done by management while the board sets direction, policy and more. I plan to be deeply involved in all things workforce yet at the appropriate level. One of the most unfortunate things is when a worker is left to take the heat for something they had no control over. I will fill that void which is often left unfilled.

9. Should the Park Board's Environmental Stewardship Department be included in all stages of planning?

Yes!

10. Some residents complain that the MPRB moves park directors too often. How will you balance the community's wishes with promotional opportunities for recreational staff?

Career ladders are important for all- how can we keep park directors connected and in relationship yet also provide opportunities for new and different work duties, full positions with advancement in them or more? I will learn and have the experience in this with my job at MAPE as a Business Agent. While I lack details about how this works at MPRB and in community I am confident we can find the appropriate balance here and I am the person for this work.

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