

Bloomington City Council at-Large

Tim Mayer (D)

Jennifer Mickel (R)

Andy Ruff (D)

Susan Sandberg (D)

Scott Tibbs (I)

1. What are your qualifications for the office you are seeking? (100 words)

MAYER: I have served as a member of the Bloomington City Council from 1983-87 and 1996- to the present. During that time, I have served on the City Plan Commission, City Board of Zoning Appeals, Growth Policies Plan(s) I and II, City Council Sidewalk Committee, B-Line Trail Development Team, Switch Yard Park Master Plan Committee and the Buskirk-Chumley Theater Board of Directors. Currently I serve on the Community Development Block Grant Physical Improvement Committee, Utilities Service Board, Jack Hopkins Social Service Funding Committee, the Mayor's IU Health Bloomington Hospital Site Evaluation Committee, 50+ Men Who Care, and the Bloomington Shelter Project committee.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: Multi-term Bloomington City Council member, serving as Council president and vice-president multiple times. Brought forward many important pieces of legislation including Indiana's first Living Wage Ordinance. Served on Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee, Jack Hopkins Social Services Committee, and many other City boards and commissions. Master's Degree in Public Affairs from Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Employed for over ten years in Monroe County Planning Department as environmental compliance officer and planner. Citizen activist for many years on many community issues.

SANDBERG: An at-large councilmember since 2007, I have served twice as Council President and have been a long-term member of the Jack Hopkins Social Services Fund Committee and the Social Services Committee for Community Development Block Grants. I'm a career advisor with the Career Development Office of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. A resident of the Matlock Heights Conservation District on Bloomington's north side, I support the health, safety and preservation of core residential neighborhoods.

TIBBS: I have been following city government for twenty years and continually learning about the issues and structure of city government. I have been active in following and studying public policy, and I am also familiar with the operations of county government. I have thirteen years' experience working in accounting, so I will understand the city budget.

2. What role should the city play in addressing homelessness and the need for affordable housing? (125 words)

MAYER: City programs address homelessness by funding social service providers through the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) process. And, grants from the City Council's Jack Hopkins Social Service Fund. Both of these programs fund physical improvements for social service agencies, to keep the doors open, and support their programs that directly address client needs. I serve on both committees

The Bloomington Police "White Shirt" initiative and street social worker programs are showing promise – they engage people on the street and offer help and support.

Affordable housing is a complex issue – especially for single individuals and people with special needs. We need a broader community conversation, including the public and private sectors, as to how we can address this issue in an effective way.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: Recently the City Council approved an appropriation ordinance to provide funding to help the former Martha's House Shelter remain open, and has also approved legislation adding housing status to our local Human Rights Ordinance to help prevent discrimination based on housing status. We should continue to support and expand the downtown resources specialist program headed by the Bloomington Police Department, which has proven to be effective in reducing nuisance problems related to homelessness and helped connect many people to important resources and needed services. We should use policies to incent affordable units in development proposals. We should support efforts for a detoxification center, and provide support and resources wherever we can across the continuum of services needed to address these problems.

SANDBERG: Last year Councilmember Chris Sturbaum and I began facilitation of the Affordable Living Study Group to research local housing costs, hear from local stakeholders, and study need gaps that prevent Bloomington residents from finding suitable housing within their means. This information will provide a solid foundation for our understanding of the direction city policy might go in addressing affordable housing and related costs of living. Finding incentives and resources for public, private and nonprofit partnerships will be the next step. I fully support public funding for the Community Sheltering Project and encourage ongoing public support for additional years as it becomes a self-sufficient shelter option for those needing temporary and sober-living assistance.

TIBBS: It is important that the city address safety. Many people do not feel safe in our downtown, especially around People's Park, Seminary Square Park and the B-Line Trail. More patrols as well as public safety education should be considered.

As to helping the homeless, the first thing we should do with local businesses (including landlords) is ask what barriers the city puts in the way of providing affordable housing and what can be done to reduce, mitigate or eliminate those barriers.

3. What approaches will you take to foster economic growth? (125 words)

MAYER: I believe that the primary function of City government is to provide the infrastructure and amenities that make our community unique and livable. Investing in our neighborhoods with programs to build and maintain sidewalks, rental housing inspection, efficient sanitation and recycling, and city support for neighborhood associations all are an important part of that mission. Support for a transportation system, should include pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle infrastructure as well as efficient public transportation service. Investing in our city parks and trail system add to building a livable community. All of the above lead to a community where people want to live, work and play. If we maintain that level of investment and care in our community – business will follow, grow and prosper.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: Given that we benefit tremendously from the presence of IU, Bloomington's economic vitality then flows from the quality of life amenities that those who reside here enjoy. The key economic development initiatives for Bloomington are those investments and policies that protect our community character and local flavor (including local businesses that add so much character), protect our natural environment and environmental quality, and that provide recreational and cultural amenities not typically found in a community of our size and location - these provide Bloomington an advantage to creative entrepreneurs who want a culturally vibrant, diverse, and naturally beautiful place to start businesses, raise families, seek education, and are the factors that make others want to stay here or move here in retirement.

SANDBERG: I am encouraged by the developments in The Trades District (Certified Technology Park), our investment in new job creation, job retention, reasonably priced workforce housing, greenspace development and green building design. This initiative will pay dividends in downtown expansion. We are eager to partner with the private sector in providing incentives to create what residents most need; good jobs with good wages. I strongly support the arts as an important element in quality of life amenities that attract economic vibrancy in Bloomington. Managing growth in a responsible, future-thinking manner will be the goal as we meet needs for economic prosperity and affordable living at all income levels. I support diversity in mixed-use buildings that provide stimulating environments for live/work community development.

TIBBS: Indiana University is the engine that drives our local economy, and much of what local business does is dependent on students. The university's economic impact mitigates or cancels some of the bad economic decisions by the city.

Transportation is critical to economic growth, so we should investigate how to improve east-west traffic, as there is no good way to get from the east to west side.

Finally, we should listen to local business as to the barriers the city puts in front of them, from micromanaging the design of a store (as was attempted with CVS in 2005) to our sign ordinances to the proposal to ban chain stores from downtown or banning plastic bags. We need to stop doing things that harm business.

4. What would you propose to better serve the social needs of senior citizens? (125 words)

MAYER: The City Council and the Mayor established the Commission on Aging, a nine-member citizen board, in 2009. I have the honor of serving on the City Council's nomination committee for appointments to the commission. The members are charged with addressing the concerns of seniors in health and wellness, transportation, employment, social services, and recreation. Recommendations from the Commission are reviewed and worked in to public policy -- such as Bloomington Transit service for seniors, community accessibility issues, and Parks and Recreation programs for seniors. The Commission celebrated its fifth annual Creative Aging Festival this past May. The City Council and the Mayor look to the commission for ideas and concerns to improve the human condition.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: Transportation services and options are extremely important for seniors – mobility is key to meeting social needs. Expanding outreach for volunteer opportunities for seniors to further take advantage of their experience and knowledge is something to possibly be expanded which provides great potential benefits in both directions. There may be additional arts programming and production opportunities where the City can play a role.

SANDBERG: Having struggled with medical, social, transportation and hospice needs of my aging parents, I am painfully aware of need gaps in services. I join Commission on Aging activists and agencies in educating the public about enhanced living experiences for aging populations. In November, I will participate in a program at City Hall called Navigating Caregiving, and I will continue my advocacy for basic support services at Area 10 Agency on Aging and Meals on Wheels. I am excited to see smart designs for mature-living developments, including a senior arts colony along the B-Line. These creative visions could greatly enhance Bloomington's potential for attracting and retaining active retirees who contribute to economic diversity and the quality of services to support aging in place.

TIBBS: For one thing, the money we waste by giving it to Planned Parenthood every year could be instead allocated to serve the needs of seniors - especially the poor and those in need of health care. Ensuring the downtown is safe would make it more inviting to seniors. I would have an open door policy for seniors to raise issues of concern.

5. What other concern do you find important and how would you address it? (125 words)

MAYER: Bloomington is faced with the unfortunate possibility that the former Martha's House, may close on December 31st. A working group, the Bloomington Sheltering Project; includes elected officials, social service providers and citizens have secured funds to keep the doors open. It is time to acknowledge that homelessness is bigger than Bloomington and that it will take a regional commitment to address the problem. While city, county and township trustees have stepped-up to the challenge – their resources are limited and offer no guarantee for

the future. I see this as an opportunity to address a long-term plan for dealing with the issue and will seek collaboration from government(s), not-for-profits, and the private sector. I will dedicate time to working on that solution.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: The scale of buildings downtown has become a major issue for preservation of community character. The City Council is currently working on legislation that will change City laws in a way that will bring the responsibility for building height waivers to the Council rather than it resting with the Plan Commission where it currently resides. We also need to revisit our City's Living Wage Ordinance to expand the policy to cover more programs and more workers and to consider increasing the wage floor and benefit levels. We also need to be more aggressive in our leadership in the area of sustainable living, renewable energy, energy efficiency, local food production, alternative transportation, etc.

SANDBERG: While I have focused my Council leadership on the concerns of our social service providers in a community with high rates of poverty, I take a balanced approach to oversight of a full array of city resources that fund basic services. Public safety and providing our first responders with adequate equipment and vehicles to deal with emergencies is an important future need. I will continue to focus on the Jack Hopkins Social Services and the Community Development Block Grants while expanding my understanding through the Affordable Living Study Group. For Bloomington to remain a healthy, economically secure community, residents from all economic levels and age demographics must have ample opportunities to live safe and self-sufficient lives through good jobs and community resources.

TIBBS: We need more openness in our civil asset forfeiture, and there should be an annual report on how much property is confiscated by the BPD via asset forfeiture. Because of the due process and civil liberties issues involved, secrecy is not acceptable. Taking money or property from someone who has not been convicted of a crime is theft.

We need to stop giving handouts to Planned Parenthood. There is no justification for doing so from the Hopkins social services fund. It is a pro-abortion political statement, not a legitimate effort to help the poor get reproductive health care. The city council needs to stop waging a culture war and instead allow the citizens of Bloomington to give money to the charities of their choice.

6. What possibilities do you see for the use of the hospital site on Second Street? (125 words)

MAYER: I am a member of Mayor Kruzan's Hospital Site Review Committee, chaired by State Senator Vi Simpson. I serve on the building/facilities review sub-committee. At this point in the process we are learning as much as possible about the buildings on the site and the infrastructure necessary to support them. The over-all goal is to determine the viability of the current structures for adaptive reuse.

Clearly the site lends itself to residential and commercial uses – considering its location to downtown, government offices, social service agencies, the B-Line Trail, the future Switch

Yard Park, shopping amenities and public transportation. The infrastructure is in place to benefit future development. The site could become a mixed-use live, work, affordable neighborhood.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: Addiction services – rehab hospital serving large area. Needed mental health facilities. Senior center, with the location central to public transit, the BLine, etc.

SANDBERG: Interesting ideas have been floated by community members, and a task force of hospital stakeholders and community leaders is exploring the realities and possibilities of this property. The future use must be compatible with the surrounding core neighborhoods. I would encourage the best possible use in replacing what is lost with new opportunities for job growth, community service and neighborhood benefit. The loss of this healthcare anchor along the 2nd Street corridor will impact surrounding businesses, and while I have no specific ideas for future use, I eagerly anticipate a robust discussion in identifying productive alternatives for economic development, good paying jobs, and filling community need gaps. This requires ongoing coordination among the public, private and nonprofit sector partners at the planning table.

TIBBS: A building like that will not be feasible for anything other than a hospital, so it will likely be torn down. However, it is not the city's role to decide how private property should be used. The city should ask Indiana University Health how we can help, and ask the business community what barriers are in place to economic development in the area, including traffic infrastructure.

7. What policies would you promote to protect the environment and conserve energy? (125 words)

MAYER: The City of Bloomington has placed high priority on environmental protection and conservation of our resources for many years. Through mayoral and council action, the city has taken measures to cut energy costs, recover resources through recycling initiatives both internal to city functions and for residents at the curb side, and dedicated staff to oversee and initiate policy. The City Utilities Department continues to work to reduce energy consumption and meet state and federal drinking water and discharge standards to protect consumers and the environment.

I look forward to working on the forth-coming Growth Policies Plan Update III (GPP III) and the zoning code updates to encourage ways for recycling in multi-family residences and commercial properties and policies for alternative energy standards for residential/commercial structures.

MICKEL: No response.

RUFF: The City has developed several guiding policy documents on environmental protection and sustainable living, most of them with the participation and help of many talented visionary, committed, citizens. We need to more aggressively pursue the measures and policies recommended in these guiding policy documents. We largely have a set of strategic plans in

place, and we have been taking policy steps in the directions recommended by those guiding documents, but we can and should do more.

SANDBERG: Bloomington has a record of supporting protocols and initiating policies to underscore our commitment to environmental stewardship, energy conservation and honoring green spaces in new developments. Under the leadership of our Sustainability Coordinator, Jackie Bauer, many improvements have been made at City Hall and in other city-owned facilities as an example for others who want to save costs through energy conservation, sound building management, and environmental awareness. We participate in the Monroe County Energy Challenge, already have a Green Building Ordinance, support alternative transportation models, and continually look for better ways to conserve, protect, and manage natural resources and our built environment. I will continue to support incentives for the private and nonprofit sectors to improve environmental practices.

TIBBS: A top-down approach with mandates, taxes and bans is a poor solution. The proposed ban on plastic bags is a perfect example of this. Instead, we should focus on education, and help people realize that conserving energy saves them money. Perhaps there could be an incentive for people to buy reusable bags, though education is critical here too as the bags can hold harmful bacteria if not washed regularly. Persuasion and education is preferable to forcing others to make the choices you would prefer though the heavy hand of government.