Cass Melin District 5

1. What motivated you to run for a City Council seat, and what is your vision for serving the public if elected?

I fell in love with Colorado Springs and have built a family here. Whether it is to participate in our kids' activities, various community events, or doing our own community service, we enjoy being involved in our community. Over the last 13 years, I have seen our city explode into something almost unrecognizable. I am running for this office because I believe it is possible to allow Colorado Springs to grow, responsibly, without losing what we love most about it. As a former Federal Contract Specialist, I have first hand experience of the need for accountability and better fiscal responsibility. I hope to use my experience and love for this city to enact policies that will help Colorado Springs remain a top place to raise a family and somewhere I am proud to call home. My vision for Colorado Springs is to grow responsibly and maintain the small town feel by working closely with the community. I would like to see more parks and open spaces, building height limits, and a bigger police force with better response times to create a safer environment. My primary goals are public safety, expanded options for homeless interactions, and more creative housing options.

2. Nationally, government has been focused on finding waste and fraud in government through DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency. Would you be in favor of a similar effort within the City of Colorado Springs? Where do you think efficiencies could be found within city Departments?

I think DOGE is fantastic. In college I wrote a paper outlining the need for a similar thing needing to happen. As a Federal Contract Specialist, I saw firsthand the importance of accountability and transparency in how our tax dollars are spent and it was a contributing factor to me getting involved. I would absolutely be in favor of similar efforts in Colorado Spring and think efficiencies will probably be found in all areas of spending and funds allocation.

3. Are there any new taxes, fees, or TABOR retention ballot issues you'd like to see put before voters? Please, explain.

I only see two issues that I would be for adjusting taxes to support, which are libraries and to support Safe Passage. The first would be to support putting forth an adjustment to the mill levy tax that supports our library placements to ensure access across Colorado Springs. Not everyone has the ability to go to college and libraries provide everyone the opportunity to self-educate. The next would be to support Safe Passage, which is a non-profit children's advocacy center that takes care of vulnerable populations that have been victims of sexual and physical abuse and/or witnessed violent crimes, which heavily relies on volunteers. This is a growing problem in our city, that they won't be able to keep up with, without additional support.

4. What does responsible city growth and development look like to you? Do you have any issues with how City Council has handled development, annexation, etc. in the recent past?

I would support infill as appropriate and as infrastructure allows. I am a strong believer in the 128% water buffer ordinance and don't believe any developers should ignore it when planning and developing anywhere in the city. I think the city should have a streamlined permitting process to support the missing middle housing that Colorado Springs needs to meet the 27,000 unit deficit that we are experiencing right now. This would allow development of housing styles such as courtyard styles, townhouses, live-work housing, and patio homes that are in high demand and low supply. I would also support building height limits and community centered form code to keep new developments in line with community character. A growing city has many tools to use to ensure responsible growth. Annexation is one of these tools it can use as long as it falls in line with the responsible parameters. I disagree with the recent approval of the high-rise apartment building downtown, which sets a new height standard for downtown outside of the community vision.

5. Should non-profit entities receive taxpayer funds to provide services to certain sectors of the public? Would you advocate for those non-profits to provide detailed reports to city council on how taxpayer money is spent?

Yes, I absolutely would partner with nonprofits in certain sectors, such as public safety, like Safe Passage, and education, such as vocational training. These things allow our community to grow in a safe way and ensure we are not missing any trade experts. If we give tax-payer funds then it must be a requirement that we know how those funds were utilized.

6. In 2024, the current city council members voted in favor of a resolution stating that Colorado Springs is not a sanctuary city. Do you agree or disagree with that vote and why?

I agree with that vote. We are not a sanctuary city and we should never insinuate that we might be. Illegal immigration brings a lot of strain on our local governments and our first focus should be the safety and needs of our families, veterans, and legal residents.

7. What is your view on the current illegal immigration problem in our city?

I believe it is a problem that is bringing a lot of strain to our city. Colorado Springs does not have the infrastructure to manage illegal immigrants. While legal immigrants contribute to our economy, illegal immigrants pull from and deplete our economy.

8. Taxpayer funds are used to provide services to homeless people. Do you think this money is well spent (or not) and should more funds be (or not be) committed to homeless programs?

Studies show that it is more cost effective to the taxpayer to provide housing and support services than incarceration, while offering better long-term outcomes for individuals to become contributing members of society. Other cities have had great success in reducing their homeless population by restructuring their efforts to focus on safe camping spaces with mental health services and workforce programs coupled with housing first initiatives

rather than overnight shelters and food services. I think if we did the same, as well as expanding police training to allow diversionary tactics to arrest, we would see the same success.

9. Housing affordability has been a hot topic in recent years. What's your solution to the problem? Should taxpayer funds be used to address this issue?

Bottom line, affordable housing is a supply issue. The city council should work to streamline the permitting process to bring down costs for increasing the housing supply, which would have an effect on housing affordability. The taxpayers' dollars should be used in situations where an area has been blighted offering incentives for redevelopment to revitalize the area in line with community standards through things such as TIFs. This would also increase housing supply. Taxpayer dollars should not be used in order to make rental payments more affordable for particular groups of individuals over others.

10. Red light cameras and speed cameras have been approved by city council members. What are your opinions about red light cameras and speed cameras?

I have seen a positive change in driving habits at the intersections near my home that have these cameras. The cost of cameras is offset by collected fees. This means they are not a large financial burden on the taxpayer. It also frees up police officers to be able to respond to emergencies and crimes, rather than sitting at a traffic light.

11. Is there anything additional you'd like to share about yourself with voters?

I think it's important to remember as a City Council Representative, that you serve as a channel for the voice of the people. It seems that sometimes our government representatives lose sight of the fact that the government was created by the people for the people. It's a bottom up system. The City Council needs to be listening to the people as well as advocating to state legislators to let them know how best to serve us. I hope to bring this culture back to our local government and beyond.