

2021 Candidate Sustainability Questionnaire

Public Safety Commissioner Candidate: Tracey L. LaBelle

1. General Sustainability:

A. What do sustainability and climate resiliency mean to you in the context of local governance?

~ Sustainability and our city's ability to adapt and thrive as the environment around us fluctuates is key to our long-term prosperity. We should be doing everything in our power to prepare for the future and promote growth.

B. What are your top 3 sustainability-related priorities for Saratoga Springs, and what concrete actions will you take to address them?

~ I think the biggest sustainability-related priorities we should be focused on in Saratoga Springs are promoting cleaner and more responsible energy usage, preserving our beautiful landscape and scenery, and encouraging eco-friendly building/development practices within the city. As a member of the city council, I will focus on bringing together people and businesses from across the spectrum to work toward solutions that benefit our sustainability goals and take into account the diverse interests that comprise our community.

2. Climate Crisis:

A. What role do you think local government should play in preparing for and addressing climate change?

~ Unfortunately, the actions of one single local government have very little impact on the effects of climate change as a whole. However, it is important that as a community we do everything in our power to ensure we are prepared for any climate-related impacts on our families and businesses. That will require all of us to work together to prepare our city for whatever lies ahead.

B. What policies and programs will you implement to improve the environmental health and climate resiliency of our community in the face of increasing climate disruption, including extreme temperatures and precipitation events?

~ I am open to any policies aimed at making Saratoga Springs more resilient to extraordinary circumstances.

C. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, what policies and programs will you implement to curb greenhouse gas emissions and under what timeline will these policies and programs be implemented?

~ New York State has recently passed extensive legislation cutting down on emission and promoting the transition to electric vehicles. As a city, I think we should be doing everything in our power to ensure that as this happens, our residents have access to the incentives and EV charging stations that will be required to make that transition.

3. Unified Development Ordinance (UDO): For several years, the city of Saratoga Springs has been engaged in a complete rewriting of the city's zoning ordinance. This Unified Development Ordinance is ostensibly the most important regulatory document in the city and will direct land use and development standards for years. The UDO is slated to be voted on after the election, on November 16.

A. Do you believe the draft UDO contains adequate sustainability measures, including protections for our natural resources and mitigations for addressing the climate crisis, to satisfy the vision laid out in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan? Please explain your answer.

The city of Saratoga Springs has a "greenbelt" – a large area of low-density, low intensity development in the outer portions of the city – to retain a sense of rural character outside of the city's core while concentrating the impacts of development and transportation within the core, to protect sensitive environmental features such as wetlands and open spaces, and to advance the city's identity as "the City in the Country."

~ I am in favor of the UDO but recognize that we should never be satisfied with where we are now. Rather, we should be striving, one step at a time, to make our city as clean and sustainable as possible.

B. Given the intense and persistent development pressure on the greenbelt, what is your assessment of the effectiveness of the UDO to protect this city resource? C. If elected, what additional measures would you take, if any, to ensure the continued existence of the city's greenbelt?

~Development is an important part of growing our city and maintaining the wonderful living conditions Saratoga Springs is famous for. It is so important that we balance our need for development and modernization with the need to preserve the beauty and tranquility that come along with being such a lush, green place. It is crucial for our city's identity that we maintain the green spaces and natural beauty that make this place home. As a member of the city council I will commit to preserving as much of our green space and wildlife habitat as possible while pursuing the city's interests.

4. Affordable Housing:

A. What steps will you take toward achieving increased opportunities for diverse and affordable housing (both rental and ownership) for both middle- and lower-income levels?

~Affordable housing in our city has become an increasingly concerning issue in recent years. As a community interested in attracting people from all walks of life it is paramount that we prioritize making housing options more affordable. That will require the city council and local officials to work with businesses and developers to enact policies that help low and middle-income families prosper in our community.

B. Would you support inclusionary zoning (or some other proposal) to promote affordable housing in Saratoga?

~ I support any policy that makes housing in Saratoga more affordable while maintaining the quality and integrity of our local housing market.

Sustainable Saratoga's Role:

A. What are your thoughts about working in cooperation with Sustainable Saratoga in helping the city achieve greater sustainability features and environmental protections?

~ I personally believe that many hands make light work and that everyone should be involved in trying to better their community. As a member of city council, I will work with anyone and everyone who shares those values and is committed to what is best for Saratoga Springs.

B. If elected, would you be receptive to a mid-term follow-up with Sustainable Saratoga, to review sustainability progress, obstacles, and possible ways we can work together?

~ Absolutely