Carlyon/North Candidate Forum 2015
Remaining Candidate Questions: Olympia Mayor & City Council Panel
Candidate: Nathaniel Jones – Position #3

1. Homelessness is a visible problem in Olympia that impacts every neighborhood and citizen. How do you envision partnering with neighboring jurisdictions and others to improve the health of individuals, businesses and the community as a whole?

   Our neighbor jurisdictions acknowledge that homelessness is a regional concern. Some state and federal support to address the housing crisis has recently been returned. Our local governments and non-profits are working together as never before to address the root causes and outcomes of the worst recession of our lifetime.

   The Thurston Thrives model which employs collective impact calls for

   Actions:
   - Reduce entry costs;
   - Teach about home ownership;
   - Rapidly re-house the homeless;
   - Increase permanent supportive housing

   Vision/Goal:
   - Affordable, adequate and safe housing for all, achieved through collaborative efforts of the public, private and non-profit sectors.

NEIGHBORHOOD SPECIFIC

2. The Wildwood commercial center is a success and a real neighborhood asset, but has raised traffic and safety concerns for some. What will you do in your elected role to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists in that area, and across Olympia?

   The success of the Wildwood commercial center is a real boost for us all. However, the area has changed significantly since the 2006 Capitol Way Corridor Study. Plans developed through the brewery visioning process suggest that the larger context of Capitol Way is also expected to change.

   Transportation safety is the first consideration and there are challenges with the graceful curve of Capitol Way and the attractive angles of the roadway intersections in the Wildwood area. Circulation in the immediate area of the commercial center presents unique challenges, including awkward turns for automobiles exiting the parking lot via Eskridge or the curb cut driveway near O'Farrell.

Safety for pedestrians and cyclists is a priority across Olympia. The first transportation goal of our Comprehensive Plan says,

> "All streets are safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists. Streets are designed to be human scale, but also can accommodate motor vehicles, and encourage safe driving."

I will continue working with members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and our able Public Works Department to address this goal.

3. Dilapidated homes, overgrown yards, and problem activities can be very challenging for neighbors, law enforcement and the city. What can be done to improve code enforcement processes and shorten timelines for producing positive resolutions to situations like these?

   Residential code enforcement requires a partnership between neighborhood volunteers and the City. Many times, neighbors are the eyes on the street, alerting the City of concerns. A balanced approach to enforcement, which avoids over-reach or coercion, is needed. Code enforcement is not as efficient as we might prefer. And, to be sure, there are times when greater authority is appropriate. We need to be certain that our systems are running well and that the City is working closely with neighborhoods.

4. In May 2015, City Council approved neighborhood grant funding for Carlyon/North's Hawthorne pathway/intersection project. Unfortunately, the City could not finalize the contract until this month, delaying action on this project intended for the summer. This was one of 4 neighborhood-led projects encountering this delay. How will you help the City work more efficiently and effectively to implement neighborhood-led projects and planning, such as the neighborhood and pathway grant programs, and subarea planning required by the updated comprehensive plan?

   Neighborhood grants and pathway grants are an excellent innovation. I am very supportive of this program. In the second cycle of funding, we are still working the kinks out. Neighborhoods submitted great projects which have stretched our administrative capacity and tested the project approval process. The City passed the test, but not without significant delay. We are learning together how to administer neighborhood grant programs.

   Efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved with more experience and more advanced planning.

GENERAL

5. Sea level rise, flooding projections, the isthmus, Capitol Lake and the lower Deschutes estuary are some of the highly controversial issues related to downtown. What are your opinions about some of these issues, and what are you willing to do to address them?

   The scientific analysis is clear; the health of Budd Inlet is tied to a healthy estuarine ecology at the mouth of the Deschutes River. The Ruckelshaus Report directs us to improve water quality, manage sediment, address invasive species, restore habitat, assure recreational access, and adopt a funding mechanism. This is essentially what the most recent state budget calls for. No one can reasonably support the status quo.

   Shared responsibility between federal, state, local, and private interests is required to protect our shoreline and stormwater system from episodic flooding, this is a current issue, not something for the future. Isthmus cleanup continues with the Health Department building and other dilapidated structures coming down soon.

   As we work together to develop a shared vision for the isthmus there are strong elements that have consensus. Olympians want a continuous pathway along our saltwater shoreline, we are willing to adapt to a changing sea level but we are not ready to abandon our low-lying areas, and we want to optimize the natural beauty of our Downtown.

6. How can the City and its Commissions work more closely and more collaboratively with neighbors affected by projects/proposals?

   I am a proponent of more powerful neighborhood associations. Continued effort is needed to make neighborhoods more capable and more relevant to residents. The Coalition has been doing good work on a variety of fronts. Geographic inclusion, normalized procedures, and continued partnerships are key to collaboration.

7. Tell us about the City budget. Are there areas you are concerned about or paying close attention to, and if so, why are those areas of interest to you?

   2016 budget development is well underway. Preliminary results leave much unfunded. Of course, it is the Council's job to manage within finite resources. Identified critical needs top $1 million, with the greatest shortfalls in Police and Community Planning. Police needs include jail medical expenses, critical incident training, and mobile technology upgrades. Other training and the expense of body and dash cams and have not been identified. Unmet Community Planning

needs are focused on implementation of the Downtown Strategy. I am interested in budgeting for the 2016 update of the Parks Plan and I recognize that the City needs to be fiscally nimble enough to respond to emerging needs and opportunities.

8. If elected, how will you stay informed about City issues including constituent concerns and perspectives?

   One of the joys of serving on the Olympia City Council is our city's level of engagement with a broad range of constituents who are generally well informed and capable of working within governmental structures. Challenges certainly do exist. I am pleased with the work of the Police Relations Ad Hoc Committee and I have high expectations for their work. This is a good example of a special initiative where the City is reaching out, seeking citizens' perspectives and concerns. A similar model is the neighborhood forums and community conversations of 2012 and 2013 when the City needed input on neighborhood relations. These constituent initiatives are not project related but generalized to help improve the City's role in the community.

Closing Statement (optional)

What skills or perspectives would you bring if elected and why are you the best fit for Council/Mayor?

I have successfully served as a moderating voice which can bridge factions of the community and of the Council. I have the skills and demeanor to do this job. Change on the Council can be a good thing, allowing for new perspectives and new energy. I can provide continuity and a knowledge base which is important to good collective decision-making.