



YOUR business is OUR business!

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GREATER LAS CRUCES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ELECTION 2023

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LAS CRUCES MAYORAL & COUNCIL CANDIDATES

To inform our membership & business community, we invite you to complete this questionnaire below. Your completed questionnaire, along with your resume, will be emailed to our list serve, along with posting on our website (lascruces.org). ***Please submit this completed questionnaire & photo to dmoore@lascruces.org no later than Thursday, October 19th.***

DISCLAIMER: The Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce does not endorse candidates, but provides our members materials & resources to make informed decisions. Additionally, we provide general election information on the municipal elections & encourage voter participation.



CANDIDATE NAME (as it appears on ballot): Cassandra L. McClure

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Election/Candidate Website: cassiemcclure.com

Please circle or highlight the position of which you are a qualified candidate:

Mayor

Councilor District 1

Councilor District 2

Councilor District 4

Referencing the first 7 questions, we encourage you to present your “Plan of Action” in these areas.

1. Please identify the leadership qualities & experiences you will bring to this position.

My leadership philosophy is to bring all the stakeholders to the table with actionable plans and ensure that those on the ground level doing the work are there and have a voice. I also prefer not to be the smartest person in the room on the topic at hand.

My leadership experiences have been in my volunteer positions as the current chair of the City of Las Cruces Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, the current vice chair of J. Paul Taylor Academy’s Governance Council, and a past president of Las Cruces Press Women.

2. Ensuring all voices are heard & considered can be daunting, what is your plan to actively engage citizens & businesses in the decision-making process for city policies & projects, while maintaining civility and decorum between all interested parties?

Active and inclusive citizen and business engagement in the decision-making process for city policies and projects is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and building trust. A well-rounded plan should encompass two strategies: multi-channel outreach and engagement standards.

The City should employ diverse communication channels to reach different demographics and interest groups. Councilors should conduct town hall meetings, public forums, surveys, and workshops to gather input from citizens and businesses. The City should establish and publicize a platform for feedback and information dissemination. Moreover, the City should collaborate with community and business associations to amplify its reach. These channels should offer multiple languages and accessibility features to ensure no one is excluded.

During meetings, The City should clearly communicate and set rules of engagement for all participants by encouraging respectful, fact-based discussions and problem-solving rather than personal attacks or divisive rhetoric. By actively managing the engagement process and emphasizing civility, our City can foster an environment where diverse voices are heard and considered while maintaining decorum.

3. Economic & business development, along with talent/workforce preparation, in Las Cruces is key to our continued growth & sustainability. Please give us your definition of “business friendly” & describe your economic development plan, including entrepreneurship.

A "business-friendly" environment refers to conditions, policies, and practices conducive to businesses' growth, sustainability, and success, particularly small and large enterprises. Such an environment is characterized by low regulatory burdens, efficient administrative processes, minimal bureaucratic hurdles, access to resources, a skilled workforce, and a general atmosphere that encourages entrepreneurship and investment.

In a business-friendly location, both new startups and established companies feel supported and motivated to operate and expand. The City can help develop and promote funding options like venture capital, angel investors, and micro-loans, much like the childcare entrepreneurship options up for debate at the City Council now.

What that looks like for us in Las Cruces is harnessing the resources and opportunities we already have regionally, including our entrepreneurship incubators like NMSU’s Arrowhead Center, and leveraging our proximity to our largest trading partner, Mexico. (As of 2023, Mexico surpassed China as the largest trading partner for the United States.)

4. Addressing homelessness is a complex issue. What strategies do you propose to provide support and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness while also addressing the concerns of residents and business owners?

A multifaceted approach is essential to address homelessness while addressing the concerns of residents and business owners. First, it's vital to invest in comprehensive support services for individuals experiencing homelessness. This includes establishing shelters and transitional housing with wraparound services, such as mental health counseling, addiction treatment, and employment assistance.

Outreach teams should be deployed to build trust and connect individuals with available resources. Additionally, a Housing First approach, prioritizing stable housing as the first step, can be effective in reducing homelessness. We can prevent chronic homelessness and promote stability by rapidly rehousing individuals and families, providing subsidies, and offering case management.

Community concerns can be addressed by involving residents and business owners. Transparent communication and collaboration are key. We must engage local stakeholders in discussions on site selection for shelters or affordable housing projects to ensure buy-in and address their concerns.

The City can establish a dedicated community liaison and/or team to act as a bridge between service providers, local businesses, and residents, addressing concerns and fostering understanding. Public-private partnerships can be formed to create job training programs and employment opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness, benefiting both the community and those in need. (For example, expanding the Mano y Mano program.)

Combining comprehensive support services with community engagement and addressing residents' and business owners' concerns is crucial in addressing homelessness effectively and compassionately.

5. Over the past few years, we have experienced tremendous residential & commercial building growth. We often hear concerns over the amount of time it takes for permitting, inspection, etc. in order to reach occupancy. It has also been stated that many of the City's policies actually increase the cost of building, which unfortunately, is passed on to the consumer. What is your plan to balance the policies of the City with a timely process from beginning to occupancy?

Balancing city policies with a timely and efficient process for residential and commercial buildings is a complex challenge, but it's essential for fostering economic growth and ensuring affordable housing. Balancing city policies with a timely building process requires collaboration, innovation, and an ongoing commitment to improvement. The goal is to create a win-win situation where building quality and safety are maintained, costs are controlled, and the community's needs are met.

We must begin with a comprehensive review of existing regulations, codes, and permitting processes. City staff could identify redundant or overly complex requirements that can be streamlined without compromising safety or quality. This process should involve input from stakeholders, including builders, architects, and residents.

The City can implement a transparent, user-friendly permitting process and develop a website that provides step-by-step guidance on permit applications, inspections, and approvals. Currently, the City offers business support services like SizeUp and one-on-one consultations.

Still, if people do not know about these projects, they don't fulfill their purpose as they possibly could.

The City can introduce expedited permitting options for projects that meet specific criteria. These can include smaller, low-risk projects or those with demonstrated community benefits. Faster permitting for these projects can incentivize development. The City can implement policies that incentivize the construction of affordable housing units, such as density bonuses, reduced fees, or tax incentives for affordable housing developers. This can help address the issue of housing affordability.

The City must regularly dialogue with stakeholders to address concerns and seek input on potential policy changes. This can include meetings with builders, developers, neighborhood associations, and city planning staff to ensure the policies are balanced and consider all perspectives. In a spirit of collaboration, the City can encourage developers to continue to enter into community benefits agreements that outline specific benefits they will provide to the community, such as affordable housing units, parks, or infrastructure improvements, in exchange for streamlined permitting.

And, if the permitting department is understaffed, the City must consider increasing resources to expedite the process. This may involve hiring more personnel, outsourcing certain tasks, or offering training to streamline the workload.

6. Ensuring the safety of our residents and businesses is paramount. What strategies do you propose to address and reduce crime in Las Cruces, while also building trust between law enforcement and the community?

First, community policing should be a core strategy, focusing on officers engaging with the district, understanding its unique needs, and working collaboratively to solve problems. Officers should be visible and accessible, participating in community events and partnering with local organizations. This approach deters crime and fosters positive relationships and trust between law enforcement and residents.

Second, accountability and transparency within law enforcement agencies are paramount. The City may need to establish a board to ensure accountability and impartial investigations of police misconduct. Training programs should emphasize de-escalation techniques, cultural competency (including conversational Spanish language abilities), and community relations.

Lastly, to address the root causes of crime, invest in social programs that provide education, job opportunities, mental health services, and substance abuse treatment. Building trust between law enforcement and the community requires a concerted effort to reform policing practices, promote accountability, and address systemic issues contributing to crime in the first place.

7. Affordable housing is a concern for many residents and businesses. What steps do you plan to take to promote and facilitate the development of income-aligned housing in Las Cruces through your role on the Las Cruces City Council?

Zoning and land-use regulations should be updated to allow for mixed-income housing developments, making it easier for affordable housing projects to be integrated into various neighborhoods. Financial incentives, such as tax breaks, subsidies, and grants, should be offered to developers willing to build income-aligned housing.

The City can engage in public-private partnerships to help leverage resources and expertise in the development process. Community engagement and education are crucial to ensure support and understanding from residents, dispelling misconceptions, and fostering inclusivity in the development of income-aligned housing.

Optional “just for fun” questions

If you could have any superpower for a day, what would it be and how would you use it to benefit the residents of Las Cruces?

I'd borrow Wonder Woman's Lasso of Truth because it would make meetings much more interesting, and, likely, more efficient.

If you had the chance to invite any historical figure, living or dead, to dinner in Las Cruces, who would it be and why? What would you talk about and where would you take them in our city?

Instead of dinner, I'd like to take Anthony Bourdain on a Saturday morning menudo tour of Las Cruces, starting with Las Trancas.

If you could choose a theme song to represent your vision for Las Cruces, what song would it be and why?

Peter Gabriel's "Down to Earth"