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## 2017 Minneapolis Park Board Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

*Responses from 2018 incoming Commissioners Brad Bourn, Jono Cowgill, Meg Forney, AK Hassan, Chris Meyer, Steffanie Musich, Kale Severson, and LaTrisha Vetaw*

Almost singularly in the United States, Minneapolis has an independently elected governing body – the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – overseeing our park system, making this one of the most important decisions that we make as a community. The nine-member Minneapolis Park Board of Commissioners sets policy and allocates funding for everything from tree-care to child-care, with far-reaching impacts on the lives of everyone who lives in or visits Minneapolis and the region.

Because of the important role of Park Board Commissioners, during the 2017 elections the League of Women Voters-Minneapolis, Trust for Public Land-Minnesota, Minneapolis Parks Foundation, and Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership jointly invited all 26 candidates to share their views about some of the issues currently facing the Minneapolis Park System. Nineteen candidates responded to the questionnaire last fall.

On January 2, 2018, the newly elected Park Board of Commissioners were sworn-in to start their four-year terms. Here, we've compiled the unedited comments of the incoming Commissioners who responded to the questionnaire last October: **Brad Bourn, Jono Cowgill, Meg Forney, AK Hassan, Chris Meyer, Steffanie Musich, Kale Severson, and LaTrisha Vetaw.**

Official information about all Park Board Commissioners is available from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board at [https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about\\_us/leadership\\_and\\_structure](https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about_us/leadership_and_structure).

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### 1. Introduction

*Please share a little about yourself to help voters get to know you:*

#### **Brad Bourn**

I'm proud to be the DFL and Labor endorsed candidate for reelection in District 6 (Southwest Minneapolis). Serving on the Park Board has been incredibly rewarding and humbling. I'm really proud of the work I've done, from creating a sustainable funding plan for neighborhood parks, preserving the independence of the park board, improving neighborhood playgrounds, investing in a new regional park along the riverfront, and so much more. I'm also humbled by the work left to do. Minneapolis leads the nation in racial disparities and need to address those disparities through the Park Board.

#### **Jono Cowgill**

I am the DFL and Labor endorsed District 4 candidate. Professionally I am an urban planner who leads comprehensive planning processes for cities around Minnesota. I have a degree in urban planning from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, I attended South High, and I grew up in Whittier and CARAG. I'm running for Park Board because I believe we need responsive, energetic, forward-thinking

representation on our Park Board. As a Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Board Member and Open Spaces Committee chair, I've witnessed the importance of engaging our entire community in stewarding our parks. We need everyone to ensure our parks are safe, healthy, and clean-today and for generations to come.

### **Meg Forney**

I am in my first term as your city-wide Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Commissioner — the only at-large woman incumbent. I have been advocating for parks and open spaces for year — first, when 13 elms were taken from my street's boulevard. I was the co-chair for the Lake Harriet Bandstand, president of People for Parks, original board member of both the Midtown Greenway Coalition and Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee. Access for all is critical and I am a proven leader in eliminating barriers. Parks define the quality of life in our city. After all, Minneapolis is a city within a park.

### **AK Hassan**

I was born in Somalia, and lived in Kenya before coming to the United States. In Minneapolis I have dedicated myself to the service of others. I am currently the Neighborhood Chair of the Ventura Village Neighborhood Association, and two term Chair of the DFL Somali-American Caucus. I have worked with Representative Ilhan Omar to enfranchise voters, and Representative Karen Clark to bring the Phillips Community Pool to Ventura Village Neighborhood. I am passionate about our city and our parks, and the opportunity to better them both by being an advocate for racial justice and progressive values.

### **Chris Meyer**

My name is Chris Meyer I'm very proud to be the DFL and Labor endorsed candidate running for Park Board, District 1.

I first came to Minnesota to attend Macalester College and then the University of Minnesota. I quickly became very involved in my local community, serving on the board of the Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association, the executive board of the University District Alliance, as president of the Chateau Housing Cooperative, and as staff at the Minnesota Daily.

I've spent my adult life fighting for progressive causes at organizations such as Working America, AFSCME, Clean Water Action, Democracy For America, and numerous candidate campaigns. I have a proven track record of advocating for students, renters, and the environment, and hope to bring that passion and expertise to the parks system as the next MPRB commissioner in district 1.

### **Steffanie Musich**

I am running to serve a second term on the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. I have worked in the banking industry for the past 15 years, as an accountant and IT analyst. I started the Friends of Lake Nokomis, a non-profit stewardship and advocacy group partnering with local government agencies and other non-profits to protect, preserve and improve Lake Nokomis and its surrounding park. Prior to joining the board, I served as a Master Gardener with Hennepin County. My son has participated in youth sports and summer programs throughout his childhood, exposing me to the diverse neighborhood park system.

### **Kale Severson**

My name is Kale Severson, and I'm committed to building capacity in our community to improve the everyday emerging needs in North Minneapolis. I want to ensure our parks are the number one system

for all users including people of color and young people. I am committed to improving hiring practices to reflect our diverse communities. I have a proven track record of working in and for our community and will remain committed as the next District 2 park commissioner.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

My name is LaTrisha Vetaw. In my day job I work with youth in North Minneapolis at NorthPoint. I've worked to put policies, systems, and environmental change into place to make our city healthier. For example, I successfully advocated a comprehensive tobacco-free parks policy for the entire parks system. As a parks commissioner, I will work to make sure our parks are safe, healthy, and welcoming to everyone. I will also work to improve and expand the community engagement process by promoting new ways to engage the community to help bridge the gap between the Park Board and communities of color.

**2. NPP20 Funding Agreement**

*The Neighborhood Parks Plan 2020 (NPP2020) is a historic agreement between the MPRB and the City of Minneapolis bringing \$11M annually to maintain, repair and replace neighborhood park facilities. A comprehensive equity matrix will be used to allocate the funds in order to help address racial and economic equity across all 160 neighborhood parks. As a commissioner, would you support the current agreement and methodology for allocation of the funds?*

**Brad Bourn**

I helped define the priorities in the NPP20 plan. There was originally no discussion of a racial equity metric to prioritize spending. I pushed hard for the inclusion of this metric and am proud that it is a core component of the plan. We must address historic underinvestment in racially concentrated areas of poverty. My opponent says he doesn't want to see Southwest Minneapolis "be denied the appropriate improvements." Look around- Southwest had disproportionate investments for more than a century, contributing to racial disparities. Advancing racial equity is recognizing this- I made sure the NPP20 plan does.

**Jono Cowgill**

Yes, I will support the NPP2020 agreement in full. I know these infrastructure upgrades are critical to the future health of our community. I would work with staff to ensure the funds are responsibly managed and that the public is well-appraised of how these key dollars are being invested in our parks.

**Meg Forney**

I was one of the lead Commissioners in securing these 20 years of funding for our neighborhood parks by building a large coalition of stakeholders. This historic ordinance, I indeed, support. MPRB inventoried all assets and condition, held extensive community outreach including the City's elected officials to inform all of the need for consistent and robust public investment. I will continue to steward the plan to ensure families in our most vulnerable communities have high quality parks for years to come. The methodology using data of racially concentrated areas of poverty and asset condition will assure equitable distribution.

**AK Hassan**

The equity matrix is complex, and it is weighted to prioritize parks that are in neighborhoods where the pressures of poverty, density, crime and poor health are felt most among youth in communities of color.

I fully support a strong prioritizing of park updates where these pressures are strongest, and feel the NPP20 appropriately assesses need as it relates to neighborhood parks in historically underfunded areas. However, the historical injustices and the lack of resources and advocacy in certain areas is not always easily quantifiable, and for the NPP20 to be truly effective, we need to make sure the voices of those not heard in chronically underfunded neighborhoods have input in how these improvements look and play out. More outreach and discussion with partners in the community and community members is key for the MPRB to deliver relevantly updated parks in under served areas. Very often people feel neighborhood park plans are done without their input, and this needs to change, especially in the context of the equity matrix in the NPP20.

**Chris Meyer**

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**Steffanie Musich**

Absolutely! This historic agreement allows for not only investment in amenities above and beyond those requiring updating due to changes in regulations and safety standards, but it takes the politics out of deciding where funds should be spent and instead supports data driven decision making. This particular aspect of the work done by the current board is one I find myself discussing with park professionals from across the country on a regular basis. It is a unique method for approaching the distribution of resources and one that I am proud is being used as a blueprint for other systems looking to address equity issues in their systems.

**Kale Severson**

Yes. I think it's important that we have Northside voices when it comes to determining where capital investments go every year. It's important to make sure we are discussing sustainability and investing in green technologies. The community engagement piece of the NPP2020 plan will be an important part of making sure Northside residents have access to an equitable park system.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

I fully support both the agreement and the methodology used to allocate funding. As a Parks Commissioner I would make sure that we follow the equity matrix to ensure that parks funding is distributed in a way that benefits the parks and neighborhoods with the most need.

### **3. Equity-Based Criteria for Prioritizing Investments**

*Few would dispute that historical inequities and opportunity gaps persist in America and Minneapolis today. What role, if any, do you think that the MPRB should play in combatting these inequities? What are the pros and cons of MPRB's equity-based matrix assuring equitable improvement of neighborhood parks as the 20-year funding plan is implemented? As a commissioner, what actions will you support that will actively improve equity in the Minneapolis Park system?*

#### **Brad Bourn**

Please see my response to question 2. Minneapolis has some of the worst racial disparities in the nation. Ensuring that new capital funding in the NPP20 plan is weighted favorably towards communities that have had historic underinvestment and weighted towards racially concentrated areas of poverty is something that I fought for in the criteria. Where we invest in our parks, we see growth in other areas as well. While the NPP20 plan will help us invest more equitably in infrastructure, we must work holistically to ensure we are investing in people as well. This means the Park Board must work to diversify its workforce revising old hiring policies that put communities of color at systemic disadvantages when applying for jobs at the Park Board, overturning systemically discriminatory ordinances and policies like "spitting and lurking" rules, increasing investments in employment programs like the Conservation Corps that gives young people of color exposure to careers in the trades and ensure that the Minneapolis Park Police have increased training in de-escalation technics and that our new body cameras are always turned on.

#### **Jono Cowgill**

The MPRB has played a laudable role in combating inequities through its equity matrices and focus on access. The Park Board has the responsibility to continue to improve its role in this important work. Improvement means continuous evaluation of data on park investments, use, and opportunity. The MPRB equity-based matrix for administering the 20-year park funding plan is in many ways historical. The Park Board should be lauded for its work on this matrix. Instead of uneven rehabilitation schedules, this matrix creates a clear weighting system that takes into account areas of poverty and areas of minority concentrations. If there was a clear "con" about the matrix, it is the fact that it has led to confusion for some of my neighbors in district 4, partly due to the natural desire to have one's adjacent park issue addressed first, and partly due to the complexity of the matrix which includes 7 weighting categories.

A few initial, concrete ways MPRB can act on equity:

- Responsibly implement the NPP 2020 plan, which special focus on public awareness of this important work.
- Implement and fund the urban agriculture plan to ensure that all areas of our city have greater access to locally grown fruits and vegetables. Use neighborhood partnerships.
- Direct staff to explore the viability of attaching enhanced Disadvantaged Business Enterprise preference weight to all park board contracting processes.
- Continue to improve the Park Board's policing approach. Invest in mental health practitioners, pilot restorative conferencing models.
- Invest in local park programming, including Teen Teamworks and Rec Plus childcare.
- Clearly state online and elsewhere that the Minneapolis park system is a place of sanctuary for all community members, no matter their documentation status.

**Meg Forney**

I am in my first term as your city-wide Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Commissioner — the only at-large woman incumbent. I have been advocating for parks and open spaces for year — first, when 13 elms were taken from my street's boulevard. I was the co-chair for the Lake Harriet Bandstand, president of People for Parks, original board member of both the Midtown Greenway Coalition and Above the Falls Community Advisory Committee. Access for all is critical and I am a proven leader in eliminating barriers. Parks define the quality of life in our city. After all, Minneapolis is a city within a park.

**AK Hassan**

Combating historical inequities is central to the NPP20 updates, and the racial equity matrix is effective, be we risk losing touch with the human element that drives the park plan itself if we rely too much on numeric representations of our communities. The goal of the NPP20 is to provide opportunity through better park funding and to create more equitable and accessible parks. This is the MPRB's responsibility, and the opportunity to affect people's lives through park accessibility is central in shoring up the gaps that plague Minneapolis. Our success will be determined by our ability to deliver these economically and culturally appropriate updates effectively and in a timely manner, but they don't happen without other important efforts, like the need to bring diverse voices in among park employees, park police and commissioners alike. We need to deliver racial equity through better park board management, employment practices, and through less heavy handed and more inclusive park policing, in conjunction with city-up policies that benefit the most dis-empowered members of society.

**Chris Meyer**

I believe that the MPRB should play a larger role in combating inequities. We must be aware of institutionalized racism, gender bias, and economic inequality, and the impact these things have on our parks system and our decision-making as commissioners. We can take steps to rectify historical disparities by investing in our under-resourced areas and in communities of color. I support implementing the MPRB equity-based matrix to prioritize investment, which takes external factors like the commissioners' implicit bias out of the equation altogether. In addition, I support expanding our step-up program, which gives at-risk youth opportunities for employment in the parks. I would also expand athletic programs and wrap-around services before/after school, and make these services free for kids who qualify for free school lunch. Finally, we must reexamine policing practices that discriminate against young people and people of color. The parks system has the potential to be a shining example of how community policing can work for Minneapolis. As commissioner, I would promote a policy of hiring new officers that look like and live in the communities they serve.

**Steffanie Musich**

The current board, and superintendent have acknowledged that past board practices around land acquisition and development of parks primarily has occurred in areas that have been privileged enough to be able to pay for them. The change in practice to focusing investment on historically underinvested areas, and those that have reached the end of their lifecycle and require replacement to ensure the ongoing safety of park users is an important evolution of practice to help reduce disparities in access that exist in the system. One of the shortfalls in the equity matrix is the difficulty for underdeveloped parks like Ed Solomon that are in moderate income neighborhoods have in achieving a high enough ranking in the matrix to have timely development per what is laid out in their Master Plans. Creative funding strategies and partnerships should be pursued to help these parks be developed for neighborhood residents in line with their desired park amenities. As a commissioner, I feel that a large part of my role is as a partner to the park staff in helping implement our equity action plan. Employees

that feel their work is supported by commissioners know we're there to back up the work that they're doing, even when it is difficult, helping to ensure that these changes which improve experiences for all are successful. This approach of setting goals that are tied to realistic timelines is an effective method of achieving progressive gains on this issue.

#### **Kale Severson**

As a Northside resident and a concerned community member, I have a great deal of investment when equity is discussed. It's imperative that the park board takes a role in identifying equity issues and remains committed to being an ally to communities that are struggling with equity issues. The pros for the equity-based metric will help communities specifically in my district with programming dollars. We have a high need to address finding spaces and places for our teens. One con might possibly be other communities will not receive funding that may have been allocated for their neighborhood park because there is a higher need in specific neighborhoods. As the next District 2 commissioner, I will hold our superintendent accountable to use the equity based metric to ensure funding is allocated to parks with high needs. I will build capacity within our newly elected board to champion these values to provide strength based programming in our struggling communities.

#### **LaTrisha Vetaw**

As a black woman, I experience inequity firsthand. The first step to dealing with inequity is to get people who look like me at the table. The Park Board has a profound and important role to play in combatting the inequities people in our city face. Parks are an essential common good and all people deserve access to safe, clean, and healthy parks. As a Park Commissioner, I will work hard to bridge the divide between the Park Board and communities of color to ensure that our parks are meeting the needs of our diverse communities. I agree with the equity-based matrix for equitable funding of parks. The matrix is a data-driven solution to a complicated problem. However, I think that the Park Board needs to do a better job of explaining the matrix to community members- particularly community members of color. If elected, I will work hard to create spaces where the community can gain a clear understanding of how the matrix will improve neighborhood parks.

### **4. Commitment to the RiverFirst Vision**

*While the Mississippi Riverfront is lined with parkland and public spaces through the Central Riverfront and Lower Gorge, North and Northeast Minneapolis have been cut off from and by the River because of the limited public access in the upper riverfront area. As a commissioner, how would you approach the community developed RiverFirst vision for transforming this segment of the river with new parks and trails as amenities to accessible jobs and homes in this area? What are your approaches to ensuring that nearby neighborhoods fully benefit from its development?*

#### **Brad Bourn**

While investment along the riverfront is critically important, if we do not take a holistic approach, we risk gentrifying North Minneapolis and displacing folks who have called the North Side their home for generations. Park Board investments must be hand-in-hand with other community investments that break down barriers to home ownership on the North Side for communities of color. If the Park Board works in coordination with community land trusts and neighborhood development corporations, we can help to ensure that communities of color can purchase homes on the Northside before property values begin to rapidly increase as a result of River First developments. Home ownership is one of the most effective ways of passing down intergenerational wealth in communities.

**Jono Cowgill**

I support the work of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, and as commissioner would use the capacity of the Park Board to facilitate community buy-in and build philanthropic coalitions to reach equity goals. I would ensure that local neighborhoods fully benefit by investing in park programming that was equitably invested in our most historically underserved neighborhoods. That would include enhanced programming to get community members to use the river on a regular basis, from kayaking and fishing to biking and bird-watching. Access is about ensuring that communities have pathways and means to get to the places in parks that they want to go. It also means providing programming and infrastructure that people of a variety of backgrounds will use.

**Meg Forney**

As an original member of the Above the Falls Citizen Advisory Committee over a decade ago, I am passionate about connecting underserved communities of North and Northeast Minneapolis to the only natural body of water in their community. Everyone should be able to have access to open spaces. The partnership with the Minneapolis Parks' Foundation's RiverFirst has leveraged private donated investment above the St. Anthony Falls. In my first term as Commissioner and as MPRB's appointee to the Foundation Board, MPRB has secured three more miles adjacent to the shores of the Mississippi River for trails and parkland. The addition of connections into these communities is equally important. Broad collaborations are needed to fulfill key accessibility for North residents, such as Federal funding to create a land bridge over Interstate #94.

**AK Hassan**

Much like the need for NPP20 to include the human elements to be successful, River First, especially the Upper Harbor Terminal in North, needs to be spearheaded by partners in cooperation with North-side residents and voices from the community. Much of RiverFIRST development will involve innovative ecological restoration and improvement, but specific plans will include retail and manufacturing space as well as other types of development. We must make sure we are protecting neighborhoods that haven't seen similar investment in the past, so that rapid gentrification that outpaces resident's economic capabilities doesn't occur. I also think that as a deterrent and predictor to these kinds of changes, the MPRB and the City Council need to advocate for commitments from partners, public and private, for affordable housing units to be allocated to areas where necessary improvements like RiverFIRST are happening. I am committed to this project and making sure it serves the residents in the plans main goal, in reconnecting residents to the city's most important waterway.

**Chris Meyer**

As a lifelong environmentalist, I appreciate the Mississippi river for the treasure that it is. I believe that all of the surrounding community should have access to the riverfront and the natural beauty it provides--including renters and folks who might be adversely affected by an increase in property values near to the riverfront. That's why I am committed to the RiverFirst Vision, with a further commitment to work closely with the communities it affects. As a commissioner, I will sign onto projects knowing I have the confidence of renters as well as the support of our communities of color. As we complete the Upper Harbor Terminal project, let's start breaking ground on the Great Northern Greenway River Link in order to give residents of North Minneapolis another mode of access to Northeast and vice versa. Finally, let's make sure that any private investment preserves our public vision for the Riverfront and the community beyond.

**Steffanie Musich**

The visionary RiverFirst initiative is helping guide the evolution of the riverfront away from its industrial past and towards a parks and people focused future. The robust engagement process that has been utilized to guide development and land acquisition thus far should be continued to ensure that useful connections from the surrounding neighborhoods are created as land is transitioned from current uses to parkland. I fully support continued land acquisition in under served communities, so that those residents can have the same access to the river that my constituents have in the 5th district.

**Kale Severson**

The key word here that is currently lacking is accessibility. I want to see access for Northside residents to the Mississippi River, as well as to Bassett and Shingle Creeks. Northside residents must have a seat and voice at the table when decisions are being made as how to approach North Harbor Terminal. I will continue to improve the communication with residents through email, social media, and general outreach through recreation centers and neighborhood events. I will work with other elected officials at the city, county, and state levels to make sure affordable housing and long term jobs are going to Northside and POC residents.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

I respect the work that's been done thus far and I am impressed with the way the project has incorporated community members and organizations. As a Parks Commissioner, I want to make sure that before the plan is put into place, we continue to get feedback from the community to make sure the plan is meeting the needs of neighbors and users. I take a collaborative approach to policy making and this would be no different. I will collaborate with people and organizations to revitalize our riverfront and put amenities in place that attract people to the area. I will also work to ensure that we are creating riverfront park space in areas that have traditionally been industrial zones.

**5. Role of Innovative Public/Private Partnerships**

*Due to ever-reducing public funding and a need for specialized expertise, there has been a trend over the past fifteen years of the Park Board leveraging public-private partnerships to better serve the public. These partnerships include in-park eateries like Sea Salt and Sand Castle, the Fred Wells Tennis Center, the Walker Sculpture Garden, Mintahoe Catering, and most recently, the redevelopment of Theodore Wirth Park through a partnership with the Loppet Foundation. With the redevelopment of the upper-riverfront, new park spaces through Parkland Dedication Ordinance requirements, and potential opportunities through the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan there are opportunities for more public-private partnerships.*

*What are your views on these public-private partnerships? What roles do public partnerships play in activating and funding existing and future park operations? How is public interest protected, and how is community engaged?*

**Brad Bourn**

When entering into public-private partnerships, too often, the public entity negotiates from a position of weakness. While many of the partnerships the Park Board has entered into have been effective, they have come at a real cost to the public good. In the case of Wirth Winter Recreation, the Park Board initiated the largest outsourcing of public jobs in the history of the Park Board- giving up assurances to living wage jobs. In the case with the Minnesota Vikings/MSFA, the Park Board failed to exercise its

leverage to insist that the new stadium install bird-safe reflective glass as a condition of making a deal on the Commons Downtown space. In the case of the downtown woonerf- the Park Board gave a \$60K subsidy to build a gate around a private green space that was sold to the board as being available for public use. The Park Board can and should have very productive private partnerships but we must first and foremost be committed to maintaining the public good and preserving the independence of the Minneapolis Park Board. This means taking more than a “bottom line” approach. I will advocate for partnerships that preserve park users’ rights, protect living wage jobs and preserve our environment.

### **Jono Cowgill**

Since the Franklin Coop Creamery began underwriting recreation programs in the late 1930’s, there has been a role for public-private partnerships in the parks. I am supportive of public-private partnerships, especially partnerships that operate at local and grassroots levels. I am particularly excited about the prospect of partnerships with neighborhood organizations, non-profits, and schools to activate the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. I also think there is a key role for larger philanthropy in guiding major infrastructure and programming opportunities in our parks. The work of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation on River First is a fantastic example of guiding philanthropic dollars towards a transformative, equity based vision for the Mississippi.

Partnerships can play an enhanced role in developing community participation in our parks. I am a proponent of exploring the role of a business development director with private sector experience who can help attract low-cost entry point vendor opportunities in our parks.

Public interest is protected in any partnership arrangement by ensuring contracts that protect union labor, residence needs and that adhere to the vision and values of the park board. Community engagement should be driven by the Park Board’s community engagement plan.

### **Meg Forney**

MPRB’s history with not-for-profit partnerships is vast and highly successful in leveraging resources for the greater community. One of the best examples is our over 100 year relationship with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts that sits on MPRB land and receives annual funding via the Legislature through the MPRB. Most recent is the success of Minneapolis Swims in securing funding from the Legislature for the Phillips pool, in an area void of swimming opportunities in a community lacking this life survival skill. The Loppet has taken on all fundraising and liability to construct a facility as well as surrounding infrastructure for year-round outdoor activities, that will be given when completed to the park system. These not-for-profit partnerships are essential to meet the growing and diverse needs of Minneapolis residents. It is imperative to me in my next term to build a park system for future generations by expanding public/not-for-profit partnerships to bring new funding in to maintain our parks. Thereby, limiting the burden on the taxpayers while ensuring open space for all residents. Continual community engagement is essential and beneficial to assure needs are met.

### **AK Hassan**

Public private partnerships create lasting social and financial relationships, those of which can help or hinder our parks. Commitments from private companies and individuals to benefit our parks are important, especially in the context of an economic downturn that has created pressures on the park budget. However, these relationships need to be relevant to park goers, and our commitments cannot in any way detract from use, create barriers to park-goers, or hurt park employees. The Walker Sculpture Garden’s choice to bring in a culturally insensitive installation is an example of the private not working to benefit the public domain, and both not engaging with the public on how public land is used. Making

sure these relationships create opportunity as opposed to alienating residents is key. The Loppet Agreement is an example of a Park Board contracting where workers were negatively affected, resulting in job loss and reduction in pay and benefits. All contracting, more importantly large-scale partnerships and public/private proposals, need to take place with more robust community engagement. As the labor endorsed candidate in District 3, I feel Park Board commissioners need to be knowledgeable of the negative impacts on workers and park users, so that they can be effective in protecting park access and employee agency.

### **Chris Meyer**

I evaluate public-private partnerships on a case-by-case basis. I oppose corporate subsidies. For example I opposed the massive subsidy to the Vikings Stadium, and was disappointed that the Park Board added an additional \$8M on top of it.

I disagree with the premise that there is a shortage of public funding. On the contrary, the perception that funding is decreasing may be the result of bad judgement in our spending priorities. I support working with vendors such as Sea Salt and encouraging private investment as a way of catalyzing big projects. However, I am opposed to using public money to subsidize for-profit interests. For example, the park board recently contributed \$8 million dollars to The Commons, next to the vikings stadium. That money could have been invested in other parks or spent on services for children and parents. As your park board commissioner, I will support private investment in the public interest-- not public subsidies for rich investors.

### **Steffanie Musich**

Public – private partnerships help provide amenities to the public that are otherwise too costly for the park board to take on and reduce the risk associated with new business ventures. The services provided by the park's concessionaires are superior to what could be provided by the organization, have the added perk of bringing investments in park infrastructure that there are not public dollars available to implement and are well loved by the public. In areas where public-private partnerships provide desired amenities and experiences that are otherwise not possible with current resources, I will consider them. During my initial campaign for office, I doorknocked 5,000 households in my district and received a lot of feedback on this type of arrangement, with encouragement to see more innovative partnerships expand the services and amenities available to Minneapolis park users. This cycle, I am hearing similar requests from residents, with a lot of support for the agreement with the Loppet, particularly in the area of increasing winter programs.

### **Kale Severson**

This is a tough subject because we want to make sure all of our residents have the opportunity to participate in activities they enjoy and that we have free or affordable programs available to all. We also want to make sure that we're not trading good union jobs for lower paying jobs. I believe we can be successful serving our community building off of some of these partnerships if we are transparent, intentional, and judicious. We must be careful not to leave the taxpayers on the hook if any private agency closes, and we must hold our private collaborators to the same standard of accessibility that I hope to elevate to the highest level possible at our parks.

### **LaTrisha Vetaw**

As someone who works for a nonprofit organization, I understand the important role that foundations and nonprofits play. These organizations bring additional opportunities and resources to our parks

system. I believe we can all work together to come up with thoughtful collaborations that take the needs of the community into account.

## **6. Strategies to Address Climate Sustainability and Improving Park Ecosystem**

*With growing impacts of climate change, managing the park eco-system has become more and more important over the past several years. As a commissioner, how would you work with staff to establish environmental priorities for parkland. Do you have any specific climate change/environmental priorities that you would promote beyond those outlined in the Ecological System Plan?*

### **Brad Bourn**

While it is easy to point to large environmental initiatives that I've supported to stop the privatization of St. Antony Falls by opposing Crown Hydro, expand park acquisitions above the falls, increase our commitment to the tree canopy, and work towards the restoration of Hall's Island, I am very proud of some of the less visible environmental issues on the Park Board that I have personally championed and will continue to advocate for, including:

Encouraging up front capital investments in rec centers that will drive down long term operating costs. This approach will improve the efficiency of our energy consumption while enabling us to save money that can be diverted to recreational programming for at-risk youth.

Advocating for a moratorium on crumb rubber synthetic turf and the elimination of Glyphosate in parks. Proposing policies to reduce and eliminate bottled water from Park Board vending machines and requiring more tap water at Park Board events through imposing environmental impact fees on vendors like Coca-Cola for every bottle sold in a vending machine.

Enacting strong erpolicies to protect our lakes and rivers from aquatic invasives through restricting lock use and requiring all boats using lake boat launches to be inspected for aquatic invasives.

Expanding a partnership with the Minnesota Conservation corps to help us battle invasive species, plant additional trees and teach Minneapolis youth green job skills to prepare them to enter the work force.

Leading and expanding the effort in the use of grazing animals to combat buckthorn and other invasives in regional parks.

### **Jono Cowgill**

First, we need to actually complete and pass an Ecological Systems Plan. The plan has stopped and started a few times, and I would make it a priority to work with staff in establishing environmental priorities through swift and thoughtful administration of this planning process. The key environmental priorities I would like to champion include:

- Revisiting our Integrated Pest Management Plan to identify bold pesticide reduction opportunities.
- Addressing the newfound concern of zebra mussels in Lake Harriet, and continuing to educate the public about how they can help combat invasive species.
- Incorporating tree trenches, carbon sequestration technology, and other innovative techniques into our Ecological Systems plan.
- Continuing the innovative work of rooftop solar throughout viable park board property.

### **Meg Forney**

Our parks' eco-system is a rich campus for leading in sustainable and renewal practices. I will continue to advocate for educating youth in environmental projects like our Green Team, for infrastructure

investments such as solar and wind resiliency, for the State's B3 (Building Benchmarks and Beyond) guidelines with priorities being heat island reduction, bird safe structures and improving our bio-diversity. Our Tree Preservation and Reforestation Fund should be renewed for continuing investments in trees, still our best weapon against global warming with carbon sequestration.

### **AK Hassan**

The Ecological System Plan is on the right track, but I feel there are missed opportunities in the ways of education in our parks around climate change. We have an ability to bring in more kids around community agriculture in our parks, settings where school board involvement and other educational partners can become invested in teaching our children on how to grow their own healthy food. In this kind of environment we can effectively teach what we all can do, as well as what the MPRB is doing, to help limit our carbon footprint and promote ecologically sound and healthy parks. The MPRB can and should make more commitments to public education, to remove pesticides from parks, to find alternative ways to deal with pressures on park ecology, and to bring in different materials to replace carcinogenic crumb rubber from artificial turf fields. We need to make commitments that will improve the health of park goers.

### **Chris Meyer**

I have been an environmental advocate for my entire career. Fighting climate change is one of the key reasons I decided to run for office at the municipal level. With little hope for action at the federal and state level, it is incumbent upon us to do our part to fight climate change in our city. I have a comprehensive plan to reduce our park system's carbon footprint, which includes transitioning to electric vehicles as a cooperative project with City Council. I support adding solar panels to all of our park buildings, ensuring our park buildings are energy efficient, and creating a zero-waste parks system. In addition to fighting climate change, we must take steps to preserve our threatened pollinator populations. I would remove existing restrictions on planting fruit trees and increase the number of pollinator-friendly plants in our parks.

### **Steffanie Musich**

One of the greatest opportunities for responding to climate change, and enhancing our city's resilience is in water management.

As the board upgrades and replaces infrastructure – all aspects of footprint reduction, including water use is assessed for potential improvements. Through my work with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District we've entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to work together with them, and the City of Minneapolis to improve the health and ecology of Minnehaha Creek by leveraging the staff and resources of our institutions to have the greatest positive impact on the creek. Currently, very few of the storm drains emptying into the creek have any sort of remediation and this partnership has the potential to change that as infrastructure upgrades take place and the master planning process for the corridor gets underway. Making green infrastructure an asset not only for water quality, but also as a method to beautify the tie in to our city's waterways should be a key component of the park board's planning process.

I would also like to see the board allocating more budget support for natural resources management to ensure that our staff is adequately trained to do the work necessary to keep our natural, and naturalized areas from being overrun with invasive species. The work begun by the current board to develop a management plan for these spaces is a good first step, but needs to have follow through from the incoming commissioners to ensure its successful implementation.

**Kale Severson**

In North Minneapolis and North Loop, we have many climate and environmental justice issues such as breathability, clean air, and clean. Communities of color and those living in poverty have been historically exposed to higher rates of lead, nitrogen oxide, and other pollutants at a higher rate than their neighbors. As we know Northern Metals is leaving because of the latest lawsuit filed, and we as a community are still trying to decide how the funding allocated from the lawsuit should be spent. We should be working on solar panels and geothermal heating and cooling in our parks to reduce our carbon footprint and become more self sustaining. We need to play a larger role in our watershed districts and find a way to involve and engage more Northside residents.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

I believe we should do all that we can to reduce our environmental impact. I successfully advocated for a comprehensive tobacco-free parks policy for our park system. Tobacco litter is the number one kind of litter found in our parks and bodies of water. To further reduce litter, I would like to see more waste/recycling/compost bins in the parks with more community education about how to dispose of waste properly. I would also work to reduce pesticide use in the parks and make sure that we are doing all we can to make our buildings more energy efficient and reliant on renewable energy. I believe that people deserve clean air and beautiful green spaces to recreate in regardless of race, gender, age, or zip code.

**7. RecQuest and Programming**

*How well do you think the MPRB meets the needs and interests of our diverse and changing community regarding sports and other youth programming? If you think it's out of balance, how would you propose to make it more equitable? What is the role of a park commissioner vs. staff in this regard?*

**Brad Bourn**

The Park Board is one of the largest out of school time providers in the State of Minnesota. Commissioners sets policy, while our staff do the yeoman's work of providing excellent serving and being the caring adults our youth see every day.

We must continue to operate and fully staff all of our rec centers. There is a push to move to more registration based programming but I believe this will take too many adults away from our buildings and parks to be available when a troubled youth drops in.

We need to invest in more multi-lingual, culturally competent and adaptive-recreation trained staff. We still have a long way to go in serving communities that have not traditionally engaged in park programming.

Given our current political climate, the Park Board should phase out the collection of personal information of parents for their children to participate. Undocumented families are finding themselves in positions where they fear filling out government forms- every child should be able to participate in park programming without fear of the collateral consequences of filling out a registration form.

The Park Board should reinstall the full-court basketball courts that were removed from parks over the last 2-3 decades. There is real, coded, systemically racist messaging that comes from the removal of full court basketball courts in Minneapolis.

We also need to invest in more soccer fields for youth.

**Jono Cowgill**

I think the Park Board has done a laudable job of providing youth and recreation programming, but could improve in a few ways.

-Coordinating with the Minneapolis Public Schools around middle school sports to retain and develop players, while keeping large numbers participating in leagues. Commissioners can lead this in conversations with the School Board around a coordinated middle school league.

-Ending any ID requirements for sports sign up. This can be a directive to staff.

-Providing more leeway for front line park staff to implement and transform programming.

Spearheading park-by-park budgets and participatory budgeting (a board policy action) would be the first step in moving towards more flexible programming options that respond to neighborhood needs.

**Meg Forney**

The MPRB system is based on when the majority of the recreation structures were built back in the '60's and '70's. Our population has changed dramatically since then. MPRB's RecQuest is presently engaging the community to set a vision for the next generation of users. Pairing this vision with the Service Master Plans for each geographic area of the city, should align budget priorities each year. Our Street Reach project is an excellent example of adjusting staffing and effective programming for the growing needs of our youths' development. Appropriate resource allocation is the role of the Board of Commissioners so staff can implement these aspirations.

**AK Hassan**

In many respects the MPRB's priorities are displayed through the budget allocations, and the fact that youth development and recreation is suffering right now is telling of where our priorities are. I support expansion of youth recreational programming, as well as making sure that these funds are augmenting and improving upon our NPP20 infrastructure investments. We need to provide funds that will alleviate the cost of child care, and expand funding for after school recreational and sports programs. Our kids should have the opportunity to feel like they are growing up in our parks with robust community involvement, and this should be taking place throughout the entire city. The role of commissioner is to make sure that the pressures of the budget are not felt by the staff in their ability to deliver effective programming. If we cannot fully fund and resource kids in our neighborhoods with strong programming, then the budget needs to be shifted.

**Chris Meyer**

The short answer is that we could be doing more. Some folks in our community have the privilege to choose between publicly funded youth athletic programs and more expensive club sports, but for many Minneapolis residents neither option is accessible in its current form. That's why I support making our youth athletic programs free for those who qualify for free school lunch. We must listen to the changing needs of our diverse community and demonstrate a willingness to reallocate space when those needs aren't being met. For example, we should dedicate more space for soccer fields. Finally, I support increasing recreational programming specifically targeted towards people of color and women.

**Steffanie Musich**

I have been working closely with park staff on the effort to provide centralized registration for youth sports, which I am hopeful is just the first step in identifying a way to combine park and school program registrations. The current patchwork system where each recreation center decides what teams to field based on previous year's participation can make it challenging for families to find teams for their children if a sport isn't popular in their area or if they're looking specifically for an all girls team. I want

to see every child that registers to play, placed on a team and provided the transportation support they need to be able to fully participate no matter where in the city they live. Park staff working on these initiatives need to be supported in this work by commissioners, as neighborhoods where the current system works just fine for them may object to changes that level the playing field for under served neighborhoods.

**Kale Severson**

RecQuest is a work in progress involving community members, and I believe the park board understood it had issues meeting the needs of our community. This is an opportunity for outreach and a way for our community to have a voice at the table. Commissioners play an important role working with staff under the support of the community to ensure we are serving the emerging needs of our community. I believe a solid partnership is an important role both sides will play to ensure we build a more equitable system.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

I think the Park Board could better meet the needs of our diverse communities in the area of recreation. I would like to see more focus on recreation activities other than just sports such as art, music, dance, and science programming. I would like to see more partnerships with schools and local youth groups. As a Parks Commissioner, I would reach out to the community to hear more about needs and how the MPRB can meet those needs. I think staff and Commissioners can collaborate so those needs are met.

**8. Vision – Top Three Priorities for Next Four Years for the District/Citywide Not Being Addressed**

*For the past five years the Trust for Public Land has determined that Minneapolis has the best park system in the nation. Do you agree with this assessment? By what criteria do you hope the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board is measured in the next four years and what steps do you see necessary to ensure that the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board scores highly within those areas? What are your top priorities for the next four years?*

**Brad Bourn**

We do have the best park system in the country. That said, our parks do not work well for everyone who calls Minneapolis home. I hope that the Trust for Public Land begins developing a racial equity matrix for investment, policies and programs. Currently their matrix primarily involved per capita spending and proximity/quantity of amenities.

My top 3 priorities

- 1) Repair the relationships the Park Board has with many communities of color and organizations working to advance racial equity. I believe the Park Board is doing some excellent work in this area but because we are overly defensive about constructive criticism, we often find ourselves in antagonistic relationships with individuals and organizations that we need to cultivate as allies.
- 2) Defend St. Anthony Falls and the rest of our park system from privatization. While public-private partnerships will likely be on the increase, we need to hold the line on privatization and oppose projects like “Crown Hydro” that will effectively sell off the fall and we must ensure that the Park Board negotiates from a position of strength when private entities are looking to monetize the value of our public parks.

3) Protect our youth and families from toxins and unsustainable environmental practices. The Park Board should stop using Glyphosate in our parks and place a moratorium and toxic crumb rubber synthetic turf.

### **Jono Cowgill**

I love our park system and think it is wonderful. I also believe we can do better in ensuring it serves – and is served by – everyone in this city. Some additional criteria that I think should be added to evaluating the success of our parks system:

-Proportion of park funding that goes to recreation programming. To achieve higher scores in these areas, we need to reevaluate our priorities and invest in park programming that supports our most vulnerable neighbors.

-Proportion of contract funding that goes to DBE firms and businesses of owned by women and people of color. This is a simple metric to track. A racial equity priority system or enhanced DBE preferencing system are a few ways the Park Board could put its money where its mouth is on equity.

### **Meg Forney**

I am humbled by the Trust for Public Land's top rating which is based on the legacy of over 134 years of an independent park board. Strong continuing stewardship is critical to maintain this rating. A criterion that I would hope we would also excel on is racial equity, with a measurement of percentage of minority staff in relation to our community's adult population.

The work I've done these past three and a half years, has paved the way to take clear steps

1) To reduce barriers to park access for all

- by expanding awareness of free and reduced lunches and programming for kids and seniors
- providing childcare opportunities at Park events to encourage engagement
- expanding hours at neighborhood parks to provide safe havens for kids

2) To bring families, kids, all residents closer to our parks

- by continuing to secure parks, trails and play spaces along the banks of the Mississippi River for North and Northeast Minneapolis and expand connections into those communities
- expanding the citizen engagement process to bring more voices to the table, letting more neighborhoods decide how to collaborate with their park

3) To build a park system for future generations by expanding public/not-for-profit partnerships to bring new funding in to maintain our parks to limit the burden on the taxpayers while ensuring open space for all residents.

And, lastly, to assure the public interest is always protected.

### **AK Hassan**

I don't disagree with this assessment, but I feel that we should judge ourselves in the next four years on how well we empower residents, most importantly children, through the NPP20 updates. We can ensure that this takes place by improving upon the racial equity matrix where it is not working, and by involving the community in the stages of implementation of the project. We can have great parks, but there is always room for improvement, and a greater ability to be more aware of constituent's concerns relating to parks issues. My priorities are effectively delivering the NPP20 updates in District 3, creating a pilot program that allows for more community gardens in or near our parks in District 3, and to prioritize residents' and park-goers' needs by being available. We can host more community forums and "park town halls", and this would create a stronger channel of communication between people and the Park Board. I would also like to see a youth advisory council be created that can act as a liaison to the park

board on issues that affect them, and what they would like to see in our parks, especially in the context of scheduled NPP20 updates.

**Chris Meyer**

I believe our Parks system is exceptional. Environmental sustainability must be a priority in order to ensure that folks are able to enjoy our parks for generations to come. We must reduce our carbon footprint, create a zero-waste park system, and preserve our local ecosystems and pollinator populations. As we plan for the future, we must keep our children at the forefront of our priorities. We must invest in youth and keep young people engaged. Finally, we must commit to rectifying a legacy of inequality across racial, economic, and gender lines. It's time to put our parks on a path to a sustainable and equitable future, for our children and for ourselves.

**Steffanie Musich**

Having visited parks across the nation and the world over the past four years I feel confident that the Minneapolis Park System has a unique park system that stands apart from other large city parks. The interconnectedness of the parks and the preservation of so much of the city's footprint as parkland, particularly along bodies of water is a key component of what makes our city so unique. I've spent much of my first four years in office helping my constituents navigate master planning processes for the parks within my district, and I am hopeful in my second term I'll be able to see some of those master plans begin implementation, so people can see the changes they requested implemented. I also look forward to the challenge of finding a consensus plan for the future of the Hiawatha Golf property that respects the property's history while meeting modern resident's needs and managing water in an environmentally responsible way.

A goal that carries over from my first term is that of improving the youth sports experience in the city to create a pathway from fundamentals to High School sports through our partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools and our youth sports community.

**Kale Severson**

We may win the title of best parks but over and over again we also "win" at having the greatest disparities so those "best parks" and best park experiences are only for some residents of our city. Over and over my community gets left behind. Northsiders, people of color, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, people traditionally disenfranchised all deserve equal access and accommodation to be able to benefit from our great park system. This is not currently the case and until we evaluate our park system from that lens, we are doing a great disservice. The criteria must include affordability for those living in poverty, accessibility for seniors, and accommodations for those with disabilities, equity, and environmental sustainability.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

Minneapolis has a wonderful parks system. However, we need to do all that we can to make sure that all members of the Minneapolis community feel that our parks are number one. In the next four years, I hope we make strides in equity and that we are able to bridge the divide between those who feel disconnected from the parks and the Park Board. I hope we see positive change in those neighborhood parks that need the most tender loving care. I am hopeful we will make strides because of the thoughtful NPP2020 Agreement and accompanying equity-based matrix.

My top priorities over the next four years are to:

1 Support healthy, welcoming, and safe parks for everyone. I've already worked to promote tobacco-free parks, and I will promote policies that reduce pesticides and keep our parks and air clean. Our parks are our city's green spaces, and we need to keep them that way.

2 Work to expand the community engagement process. I believe that the best decisions are made when the community is able to make their voice heard. I'll promote new ways to engage the Minneapolis community and help bridge the gap between communities of color and the park board.

3 Support youth recreation opportunities, like arts, music, and dance programs. Parks are places where kids come together to learn, grow, and form bonds with one another! I will invest in old and new programs that bring more Minneapolis children to the parks, improving their overall wellbeing.

## 9. Balancing Priorities

*Our evolving and growing community has a series of needs to be addressed, including affordable housing, connected and affordable multi-modal transportation system, strong employment base, quality parks and public realm, equity and achievement gaps. What is the role of MPRB in these issues, how do the issues interrelate, and as Commissioner, how would you prioritize and balance them in your work?*

### **Brad Bourn**

I believe I addressed much of this question in my previous responses.

The Park Board should work on future developments in a holistic manner with local land trusts and neighborhood development corporations to ensure that communities of color have the ability to purchase homes near new park investments before those park investment drive up property values. The Park Board can and should provide a massive jobs training program for young adults looking to enter into careers in the trades. The Park Board can work with our unions as well as employment readiness organizations to build apprenticeship projects that allow for on-the-job training opportunities on public works projects alongside our skilled labor.

The Park Board's trail system was originally created a recreation bike trail system but we need to realize that it plays an ever increasing role as a commuter trail system. Beyond working with city planning to increase trail connections, we need to look to policy reforms that make our trails more connected to the city's bikeways including being more friendly to NiceRide station placement, creating more dedicated bike lanes on Minneapolis Parkways and making our parks more accessible to transit users.

### **Jono Cowgill**

I'll answer this as best I can in 250 words. People need good incomes and quality housing to live decent lives. They also need to be part of healthy communities that look out for and care for each other. Our park system is a civic bastion where a variety of opportunities are offered that help ease financial and social burdens of residents: childcare, recreation opportunities, safe spaces to play, access to educational and social service resources, and social connections. The park board can and does play a role in creating healthier communities by providing some of these resources at little or no cost. We can do better by prioritizing creative investment in programs that serve our most vulnerable neighbors: the homeless, immigrant communities, low wealth families, and minorities. I will prioritize these investments over shiny new development projects because I believe – as Park Board Commissioner Alfred Pillsbury did – that government investing in the needs of all our citizens is as vital as any other function of government.

**Meg Forney**

Collaboration with multi-jurisdictions is essential for each of these issues and prioritizing and balancing is critical during the annual budget review. The strength of these partnerships will direct their outcomes. MPRB's Memorandum of Understanding with the Minneapolis School Board has the potential to leverage resources for Equity and the Achievement Gaps. Collaborating with the City, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council is critical to establish Connected and Affordable Multi-Modal Transportation by developing safe connections between park trails and mass transit. Affordable Housing could be impacted through tax relief for homeowners within a defined radius of NPP2020 improvements. Legislative action would be needed. Increased funding through the Legislature for youth employment programs is needed for a Strong Employment Base. Quality Parks and the Public Realm will be enhanced with the incorporation of a racial equity matrix for regional parks and funding by the Metropolitan Council should reward this data-driven prioritizing. Continued cooperation with the City of Minneapolis to implement the use of Park Dedication Funds to grow connections and parks in newly developed areas will create Quality Parks and the Public Realm.

**AK Hassan**

Equity concerns are in zoning, housing, transportation, park access, education, employment, health, and policing, and all are affected by park policy. The achievement gap is the most pressing concern facing our children in the city of Minneapolis, and the remedy to this woe is multi-faceted. One of these facets is making sure the MPRB is doing everything it can to create better access to parks, expand funding to recreational programs and youth development, and to empower communities of color who have not seen the same resources and advocacy. The MPRB as the biggest landholder in the city has a commitment to promoting affordable housing near our parks, as parks should not create an unlivable environment for residents, but quite the opposite. Our contracting needs to respect MPRB workers, and our employment practices also need to bring in new diverse voices, those who feel like they have a say in their workplace environment. Park police need to look like their communities as our city continues to change, and over policing is a sign that the equity matrix cannot stop at park funding assessments. The MPRB must promote these policies holistically, using parks as a foundation for promoting equity and justice in our communities. If the MPRB is in fact a "primary contributor to the quality of life in all parts of the city", which no resident can doubt, then the mission of the board is to always strive to improve upon the ways in which this promise is delivered.

**Chris Meyer**

I believe that we can, and must, pursue all of these goals in conjunction with one another. The role of the MPRB in providing quality parks is obvious. We are fortunate to have a top-rate parks system. In addition, the MPRB is a large-scale employer, putting hundreds of Minneapolitans to work in our parks. Implementing fully-connected, multi-modal transit will require the cooperation of the MPRB, which controls 15% of the land in our city. As far as affordable housing and equity, the role of the MPRB is less clear-cut. These things will require us to be creative. The MPRB needs to play an advocacy-centered role in promoting affordable housing; that means we must work with city council to offset any increase in housing costs due to new projects and capital investments. Finally, creating an equitable parks system starts with our youth. We must ensure that all children have access to enrichment in our parks system. I have laid out a number of steps we can take, but I know that this job will be dynamic. As your park commissioner, I will advocate in the best interest of all our community members, and will always put your voice first.

**Steffanie Musich**

The city council and mayor have been working on increasing housing density within the city's boundaries, easing the tax burden on current residents, but increasing the use of parks. As we moved through the South Service Area Master Planning process, understanding that parks serve different needs for neighborhoods with different densities was an important design element to acknowledge, as was the importance of tying into existing trail networks and public transportation nodes. Consistency in process makes participating in these planning efforts more approachable for the public, resulting in plans that are more reflective of the needs of the community as a whole.

**Kale Severson**

I'm proud to have been endorsed by our current Minneapolis School Board Chair, Vice Chair, as well as North Minneapolis' School Board Director. This is because I believe strongly in working across systems to make sure our youth and our community have the best possible resources and opportunities. Wrap around services are proven to work especially for youth and families in challenging situations. The more we partner with our schools, housing, transit, and community organizations, the more we will be able to interrupt the prison pipeline, transform trauma into repair, revolutionize policing into engagement, and mentor disenfranchised youth to emerge as committed community members.

**LaTrisha Vetaw**

I will balance priorities by listening to community members, doing my homework, talking to community leaders and organizations, and gathering input from MPRB staff. I am coalition builder and I believe that we need to make decisions and set priorities by working together and listening to those who are most impacted.