Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce Candidate Questionnaire

Please tell us about yourself.

Your Name: *

Arvina Martin

Aldermanic District: *

City of Madison, District 11

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Instructions: Please state your position on the following issues. Please limit answers to 100 words. Any answers exceeding the word count limitations will be cut after 100 words.

If you have filled out this questionnaire before, you may skip starred** questions or modify previous answers to those questions. If you skip starred answers on this questionnaire, we will re-publish your 2015 answers.

**1. Why are you seeking this office?

I've spent the majority of my professional career working with governments and their agencies at the local, county, tribal, and state levels. I know the struggles of looking at a budget and seeing how to provide the most good to the most people, and how to work with other units of government to make sure efforts are the most impactful. I've also worked with people seeking services and assistance, knowing that our actions directly impact them. Balancing the needs and resources of a city is a task that requires great thought and care.

**2. What in your background or experiences qualifies you to understand the unique needs facing small businesses?

While I've not run a business myself, I've heard the experiences of friends and family trying to get a small business off the ground. From salons, to restaurants and retail, the overhead and upfront costs can be overwhelming, before even getting to the maintenance stage of business ownership.

**3. What are the most important issues the businesses in your district face?

District 11 has retail, service, and professional businesses. Their greatest challenges are increasing rents and demand for space as our commercial areas redevelop. Hilldale's redevelopment, while necessary, illustrates this challenge as some local businesses have not been able to stay at the mall, despite the best efforts of themselves and the mall owners.

4. What is the City of Madison's role in growing the economy? How can the City of Madison best support the growth and retention of jobs?

The City's primary role is in making Madison a desirable place to live and work. Maintaining infrastructure and services, upgrading public transportation, and provided support for job training and business improvement loans and grants and creating TIF districts in disadvantaged areas are all steps the City can take. Job training and encouraging new businesses is particularly important now that Oscar Mayer has left the City.

5. How can the City of Madison best attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce?

Job trainings, and re-training, will help people stay in the workforce by keeping their skill set relevant to a modern economy. Support for working families, especially during the training process, will help keep people at work during unforeseen circumstances, such as illness or a loss of childcare. With the possibility that a large number of Madisonians may lose healthcare in coming months, that support would be particularly crucial. Issues like loss of healthcare have a disproportionate impact on people of color.

**6. Do you support the use of TIF, and how do you believe it should be utilized moving forward? How would you rate the City of Madison's past use of TIF? (Would you describe the use of TIF as underutilized, over-utilized, or appropriate?)

I support Madison continuing its current TIF Policy. It has been applied appropriately, and overall projects have had strong returns for the community. TIF has not seen as much application in struggling parts of town as I would like to see, though a lack of requests for projects in those parts of town is largely to blame. Those cases may warrant creation of "speculative TIDs" that do not have a generator project when they are created, but only if upfront spending is limited in case projects are not proposed. TIF could also see additional use in the area of job creation and retention, with an emphasis on benefiting Madison's residents.

7. What specific initiatives in the Connect Madison economic development strategy (http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/economicdevelopment/economic-strategy-symposium/554/) do you support, and which, if any, would you like to see modified? Why?

I think it is important for new businesses to be developed with easy access to public transportation, as well as work based learning for local youth. These opportunities for youth will add to the long term health of local businesses. The BAT will encourage and assist new business owners from diverse backgrounds, which also will lead to a more diverse workforce.

8. What is your perception of Madison's business brand? How do you think business in Madison is perceived locally, statewide, and nationally?

I think Madison businesses are seen locally and statewide as progressive and forward thinking, though the false impression that Madison is a difficulty City to work in persists in some corners. We do not appear to have a nationwide image to maintain, which creates an opportunity to form one. We have many innovative thinkers and business owners across many fields, from health care to retail. We can continue to encourage them, as well as up and coming business-people so that their profiles continue to rise to national prominence.

9. How do you define economic development? Please elaborate.

Economic development means expanding the greater Madison area's economy on a micro and macro level. It includes building a local tax base, building economic capacity in the private sector, and raising the economic wellbeing of the City's residents. Economic development should serve the interests of the public first and foremost, balanced with the needs of the private sector when those interests and needs conflict. That balance should be determined on a case by case basis, one-size-fits-all answers often prove insufficient if not damaging.

10. The Chamber believes that equity and social mobility are achieved through wealth creation and that the surest way is through an entrepreneurial class of color. The Chamber is launching initiatives to support this goal. What do you believe is the City of Madison's role in creating an entrepreneurial class of color?

The City should work with existing Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, as well as the civil rights divisions of state and federal agencies. Organizations that reach out to traditionally under-represented populations, like the Madison Black Chamber of Commerce, Latino Chamber of Commerce, should also be consulted, as they regularly lay the groundwork in terms of outreach to underrepresented communities. Continuing educational programs for youth, to expose them to different fields, also encourages communities of color to grow their entrepreneurial goals.

11. How can the City of Madison provide better customer service to new or existing businesses that seek approval through the permitting and planning processes? How do you define customer service in this case?

Customer service means providing information and assistance with empathy, care, and accuracy. The City must maintain adequate staff with sufficient training to provide that support. The recent removal of Alcohol Policy coordination from the Mayor's office has created a gap in support for businesses that seek or have those licenses, which may be filled in the Clerk's Office soon, though it isn't clear the level of service will be comparable. Staff must be and are adequately trained on the basics, but training could improve on issues of cultural competency.

12. If offered an endorsement from the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, would you accept it? *

◉ Yes

◯ No

By submitting this candidate questionnaire, you agree that the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce may publish it with the intent of sharing it with its membership and the general public. *

◉ I acknowledge that the Chamber will publish my answers to this questionnaire