



**AAUW Naperville Area
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Consolidated Election
April 4, 2023**

**City of Naperville Mayoral Candidates
(alphabetical order)
Vote for not more than 1**

1. [Tiffany Stephens](#)
2. [Scott Wehri](#)
3. [Benjamin \(Benny\) White](#)

Methodology

We emailed all candidates and invited them to answer questions relevant to AAUW public policy priorities and the position the candidates are seeking. We sent follow-up reminders and collated all the responses. Candidates' responses have not been edited. Candidates who did not respond are indicated as "No response received."

Tiffany Stephens

No response received.

Scott Wehrli

No response received.

Benjamin (Benny) White

Website: <https://www.bennywhite.org>

*1. How can the city council better implement the city's diversity goals in its operations?
What actions would you support to insure diversity in hiring in all city positions?*

Apple has a notable line they follow in their hiring: "Humanity is plural, not singular."

Promoting diversity is about both reflecting who our community is and expanding our thinking on how to solve diverse community problems. Naperville is not one homogeneous community, so we must not look at how to serve our residents' needs as solving one homogeneous problem. During the past few years, for instance, an organization I started, Naperville Neighbors United, asked several local East Asian-American residents and City of Naperville employees to discuss their experiences on a Zoom webinar during the pandemic. Several had recently experienced anti-Asian prejudice that blamed them for the origin and spread of COVID. Although some were not accustomed to discussing those topics in a public forum, they were willing to share their own experiences.

Our mission in Naperville is "To provide services that ensure a high quality of life, sound fiscal management, and a dynamic business environment, while creating an inclusive community that values diversity." That's not just window-dressing. It's a statement we take very seriously. I was the Councilman who pressed the City to amend our statement after some incidents that showed that Naperville was not immune to racist events happening in our public spaces and in our businesses and restaurants.

Now that we have hired a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion manager (Dr. Geneace Williams), the City has set a calendar of events to get the community involved called "Embrace Naperville: Empowering our Mission Through a Year of Learning." I hope that

our employees are actively involved in these activities as well as our residents and business leaders.

Hiring a great staff can be a challenge, especially recently when we find fewer candidates for jobs in areas like public safety. We used to have a few hundred applicants for every opening for a police officer or firefighter. Now that is down to less than 20 per job. In order to attract more candidates we need to continue to do some active recruiting at job fairs and using other methods of finding excellent people to fill these jobs as older employees retire.

2. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for city employees is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

During the recession the city began a new category of employee, called Tier 2. Tier 1 employees were ones who had been hired before a specific date. This was a cost-cutting measure when Naperville had a large budget gap and it was unknown how long the recession might last. The benefits were considerably reduced for employees who were Tier 2. Right now a typical employee has 15 days (three weeks of workdays) of paid leave when hired and adds a day for every additional year of employment, maxing out at year 16 with 30 days.

The City has about a dozen unions (including the police and fire unions) that each negotiate their contracts separately, and the City employs a full-time labor lawyer to handle all these contracts. It also has a considerable number of non-unionized employees. Until a significant change for pregnancy leave a few years ago, it was difficult even for unionized employees who wanted to build a family to assemble sufficient leave to be able to have a child. This was very hard on our employees and their spouses of childbearing age. At one point a previous Council was not convinced that it was a necessary benefit. However, that type of paid family leave finally passed, much to the satisfaction of Naperville employees. It is interesting that among the people supporting this leave were the City Manager, the Fire Chief, and the Police Chief.

Naperville needs to be competitive both with the private sector and other public sectors to retain our best employees. I am not aware of requests for a change at this time, but I am open to listening to issues that employees might have.

3. In many communities, selection of appropriate materials for public libraries has become a contentious issue. Since the City Council must approve appointments to the Library Board, please share your views on the role of the board in collection development and material selection.

Our public library is regularly ranked nationally as being number one in its class. It's enjoying its 14th honor of a 5-star rating since 2009. I first have to applaud that long record of exceptional performance. It's another example of Naperville's commitment to providing top-flight services to its residents, and why Naperville is such a big draw for families. Just drive by any of the libraries (I am closest to the 95th Street Branch) and you'll see how packed the parking lot is, even when nearby stores are shut. I was happy to see that the City Council several years ago asked the library to extend its very popular Sunday hours, which is very helpful for students and their parents as they work on those Monday morning assignment deadlines!

As this question alludes to, that record doesn't come automatically. It comes because we continue to do the work needed to maintain those standards—from whom the mayor selects for the Library Board of Trustees, to choosing a great library director, to ensuring that policies are followed without bias or prejudice, and that the public's money is spent judiciously and carefully.

The library's success is a function of our ability to find the right people to uphold and further the library's mission at each level of its operations. Its reputation suggests that we've done well there. The library's record continues because our commitment to the library's mission continues.

The library has clear policies on material selection and selection dispute resolution. This allows for the public to have their views heard. And it spells out that the final responsibility for material selection rests with the executive director, not the board. As mayor, I would support those policies and expect that they are followed. I want to see our library continue to be recognized as exceptional and a draw for families of all backgrounds and viewpoints.