



**AAUW Naperville Area
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Consolidated Election
April 4, 2023**

**Naperville Park District Commissioner Candidates
(alphabetical order)
Vote for not more than 3**

1. [Mahboube “Michelle” Haghghi](#)
2. [Christopher Jacks](#)
3. [Rich Janor](#)
4. [John Risvold](#)

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.”

Mahboube “Michelle” Haghighi

No response received.

Christopher Jacks

No response received.

Rich Janor

No response received.

John Risvold

Website: www.johnrisvold.com

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/Risvold4Naperville>
[Instagram.com/Riz4NapervilleParks](https://www.instagram.com/Riz4NapervilleParks)

1. 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?

No, I do not believe the current policy is sufficient or appropriate. Initially, the policy is insufficient because it requires employees to accrue sick days up to a maximum of 12 weeks, in order to receive the benefit. This is robbing Peter to pay Paul. I believe that all employees should receive the benefit of paid leave separate and distinct from individual sick days.

Additionally, I believe there should be special consideration given maternity and paternity leave, which should be separate and distinct. Parents of newborn children, in an age of remote work, should be given the opportunity to take paid leave and bond with their newborn, and in the case of mothers, recover from labor and delivery.

I was afforded the opportunity to take significant leave when my youngest son was born, as was my wife, and the benefit to our family and children was tremendous. Our city employees should be afforded the same benefit, without being forced to first accrue the time as sick-leave days.

I would also work with City Council members in order to ensure that Naperville gets the full benefit of the Illinois Paid Family Leave Act which goes into effect in 2024. This act gives employees up to 40 hours of unpaid leave to be used for any purpose and applies to all employees in Illinois, including state and local government agencies, however, the act does not apply to Park District employees. I would work with City Council to explore the impact of the act on Park District employees and develop an ordinance that ensures the Illinois Paid Family Leave Act applies to Park District employees who would otherwise be exempt from the benefits of the act.

2. What strategies would you advocate to increase inclusiveness in park district hiring, policies and programs for diverse populations, including for LGBTQIA+ and people with different abilities?

Inclusiveness in hiring starts with the City of Naperville's mission statement. The first requirement of hiring any employee of the Park District (or any City employee) should be whether they will agree to support and live out our City's mission statement. This is important to me, because the City's mission statement states explicitly that one of the missions of the city is to create "an inclusive community that values diversity."

We need to ensure that every individual who comes to work in Naperville or for the City of Naperville, lives out and supports these values. Ensuring that all hiring is based around this important value in our City's mission statement will be an important first step toward a more inclusive community.

Second, I want to continue to support the work the City has done since adding diversity and inclusion to our mission statement in 2019. Since that time, the City has hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager, held community listening sessions focused on engaging everyone in the community, and has partnered with eight different DEI organizations. I would seek to work with Dr. Williams, the City's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager, to learn from her expertise in order to ensure that current and future Park programs are inclusive, accessible and diverse. I believe strongly that we should rely on experts and gather all of the facts and information available before we make decisions. Making sure everyone has a seat at the table of policy decisions, makes for a more inclusive community.

In the Park District programming, I would like to see a program that is similar to the City's Youth Inclusion Ambassadors program. The Park District offers a wide array of programs for youth and creating a group of youth ambassadors who are focused on inclusion and diversity will make all children feel welcome and safe to participate. When looking to adult programming, we need to listen to the community, work with Dr. Williams and learn

how the programs can best be tailored to ensure accessibility, opportunity, and equality in programming.

3. What actions are appropriate to ensure that the Park District fee assistance program is adequately funded, promoted and accessible to community members?

The Fee Assistance program is one of the best ways, in my opinion, to ensure equal opportunity to participate in park programs for all community members. Currently the combination of public funds, grants and private philanthropic donation has ensured that the program remains well funded. I want to continue to strengthen philanthropic partnerships that would reduce the amount of tax dollars spent, and potentially create a surplus, while ensuring that the fee assistance program is fully funded year over year.

With regard to promotion and accessibility of the program, I believe that the Park District has done an exemplary job of this in the past and I want to continue to build on that success. Since 2008, the Park District has grown the fee assistance program by 270%. The program application is easily available on the Park District's revamped website and offers applications in both English and Spanish. In the community, the Park District could partner with the School Districts to provide fee assistance information to all students, that they could in turn provide to their families.

When registering for programs, the Park District should include check boxes during the registration process, that would allow an applicant to indicate to the Park District that they want more information about fee assistance, or that they qualify for fee assistance. The Park District already has this option during registration to allow individuals to indicate that they require or desire accessibility assistance. Adding a fee assistance option would be virtually free and would further promote opportunity and accessibility.