



**AAUW Naperville Area
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Consolidated Election
April 4, 2023**

**City of Naperville Council Candidates
(alphabetical order)
Vote for not more than 4**

1. [Meghna Bansal](#)
2. [Nag Jaiswal](#)
3. [Patrick Kelly](#)
4. [Allison Longenbaugh](#)
5. [Rebecca Malotke-Meslin](#)
6. [Josh McBroom](#)
7. [Ashley South](#)
8. [Ashfaq Syed](#)
9. [Jodi Trendler](#)
10. [Madhu Uppal](#)
11. [Nathan "Nate" Wilson](#)

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."

Meghna Bansal

Website: <https://meghnaforcouncil.com/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/meghnaforcouncil>

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?

Naperville, with its growing population, is becoming a very diverse community. The City's current ratio is 49.2% are male and 50.8% are female and over 35% non-white population. Being a mother of two daughters, and an Indian American, I come from a diverse background and can relate to this very well. Diversity and Inclusion is one of my key platforms. It is extremely important that the City Council must implement diversity goals and support them.

Creating a welcoming environment for all ethnicities, and especially for women should be encouraged and respected. City officials and staff management must support the employees to engage in diverse activities. I support empowering the women in the workplace. They bring positive effects on communication, innovation, and productivity. I am a Finance Executive for Global Tech company for 20+ years, Women Elected Official of Wheatland Township, Women Co-chair for Senior Committee of Township, Member of Board of Directors for Homeowners association for 6+ years. Educating and empowering my own daughters is my priority.

It is important to raise and spread the awareness regarding the diverse community and gender equality issues through public events and forums. Organizing cultural events from different groups, fairs festivals, educational events will certainly help the residents to learn about other culture, their lifestyles, and beliefs. I am key volunteer and women chair of our Non-Profit Organization, Indian Community Outreach, does a mega event known as the India Day Parade where they expose culture and values to the entire City. The city within the budgetary guidelines can help local communities to showcase and engage through international food festival, parades, celebrations, festivals, film, and documentary screenings. The city must make sure that everyone's voice is being heard and everyone is included.

City hiring should be measured and analyzed. Everyone in consideration with gender equality must access to same rewards, opportunities and resources in job interview and hiring process. Workplace should be all inclusive place. I believe women in leadership brings in a different constructive perspective. It certainly will benefit the city and its residents.

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?

To my understanding based on my discussion with interim City HR Director, currently city employees leave policies vary by department they work and includes Sick leaves, Vacation, Paid time Off and Maternity leave. Since I don't have access to exact leaves granted by each department, I will work with the experts, once elected, to review the need of changing the leave policy. I will also encourage city to reach out to all employees via survey to get their inputs.

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.

In Naperville the City council owns the responsibility to appoint Library Board. In my opinion, such appointments should be made judiciously to represent all viewpoints. The collection and material selection must be in benefit and favor of residents and community. It is important to work within framework of policies. City council must look at the budgetary limitations to approve the materials. The collection must serve and includes all culture, literatures, more focused on future educational requirements. As a community overall, the material shall represent diverse point of view and interests in the form of print, media and electronically. Community survey and participation would help the library board to enhance any collection materials. The demographics should be mixed including kids, seniors, and young adults to get various perspectives of adding material. Furthermore, encouraging historical, social, or cultural significance would also make an impact.

Nag Jaiswal

No response received.

Patrick Kelly

Website: <https://kellyfornaperville.com/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/CouncilmanKelly/>

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?

Since I was elected in 2019, the City Council has made major strides in making diversity and inclusion a key part of the City's focus. In addition to codifying that promise in our mission statement, I helped lead the effort to hire Dr. Geneace Williams to be Naperville's first full-time manager focused on diversity initiatives within the City and the community. I believe we can further our efforts by ensuring that we are measuring our hiring and retention statistics for those who fall in diverse categories relative to our employees who fall within the majority, and I look forward to continuing to make progress in this very important area moving forward.

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?

Early in my first term on City Council, I supported a very important change to staff benefits that granted paid leave time to new parents or for employees caring for a sick family member. Before this change, new parents went unpaid when taking FMLA, which was not family friendly, nor competitive from a talent perspective. Now, full-time employees receive up to 12 weeks paid parental leave, and all employees can accrue up to 12 weeks paid leave for caring for sick family members. Since we implemented those changes, I have received positive feedback and thanks from many of our City employees for helping them to stay home with new babies, recover from illness, and assist aging parents. All of this was accomplished in a fiscally responsible way that benefits our employees and their families, while also protecting the City because any unused time is not paid out when someone leaves or retires from the City. I believe the policy we passed in 2020 is appropriate and sufficient, but I am always willing to review our policies and adapt if necessary to meet our employees' needs and/or to remain competitive in the marketplace.

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.

The Naperville Library board trustees are chosen by the Mayor and approved by City Council. In my opinion, it is critical that the volunteers chosen for the Library Board are supportive of libraries, their funding, and freedom of speech. Naperville's Library Board trustees do not and should not have a part in choosing specific library materials or collection development. I believe those are critical roles to be filled by our professional library staff, and fall outside the normal operations of the Board. I will stand behind the choices and direction of library staff as to material selections, and the accountability for those choices ultimately lies with the Executive Director of the library. If the community has concerns about material selections, the library's Executive Team will make those decisions with supervision from the City Manager, and with input from the City Council if necessary.

Allison Longenbaugh

Social Media: <https://twitter.com/allison4naper>
<https://www.instagram.com/allison4naperville/>
<https://www.tiktok.com/@allison4naperville>

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?

Naperville has done two things that will help us achieve those goals: 1) adding diversity to the city's mission statement and 2) hiring a DEI Manager. I supported both. Hiring and retention are a challenge in all departments, especially in public safety divisions. Other municipalities have lured Naperville employees with enhanced compensation and benefits. First, the city should conduct a full compensation review to ensure that they are attracting and retaining the best and continuing to provide top quality services to residents and businesses. Second, the DEI Manager should provide guidance and resources in the hiring process to make sure that DEI is integrated in the process.

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?

Compensation is key to attracting and retaining employees (see #1) and that includes benefits. It was a win for city employees when Council amended their paid leave policy in January 2020 to include 12 weeks of paid leave and to add sick leave to paid-time-off (PTO) plans. Twelve weeks is commensurate with corporate plans; I received 12 weeks when I had my daughters. Staff designed the sick leave plans to discourage abuse while

providing a safety net for employees. I think the plan is appropriate and consistent with market practices.

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.

As a current Trustee, I am keeping a close eye on the attacks I've seen at neighboring libraries and at the national level. It is not the role of the board to direct the experts on what materials to choose. I trust our library managers to keep books on the shelves and to fill almost every book request to meet the needs of our diverse community. "A truly great library has something to offend everyone." Here's the "material reconsideration" policy, which staff presented at the Library Board meeting in May 2022: If someone requests something to be "reconsidered", a staff member discusses the request with the patron and if a resolution cannot be achieved, the executive team gets involved. No reconsideration request has ever reached the Library Board. While most Naperville residents have no appetite for banning books, the number of challenges is going up. In 2021, there were 729, which was triple the number in 2020, and they have started targeting books for teens. As a Trustee, I am confident in their process.

Rebecca Malotke-Meslin

Website: www.rebeccafornapervillecitycouncil.com

Social Media: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rebeccaforcitycouncil/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rebeccaforcitycouncil/>

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?

One major way to implement the City's diversity goals is to effectively utilize the City's existing Boards and Commissions. It would be an opportunity to integrate the work of Dr. Geneace Williams and broader DEI goals into the current decision-making that is already taking place. If elected, I would initiate a review of these groups and first create a process to ensure a diverse cross-section of residents have the opportunity to be appointed. The term diversity encompasses gender, race, age, employment, socio-economic status, culture, religion, etc. Next, I will build structures so each Board and Commission has a specific DEI liaison who asks key questions about key decisions being made and how the effects (intended on unintended) would impact all, especially

those communities that may be underserved, underrepresented, and historically marginalized.

Improving diversity in hiring is a large-scale and necessary challenge for the City to tackle with a clear plan and goals. Collaboration between Human Resources and the Office of DEI will be instrumental in identifying specific goals for representation based on current employee data and comparative market data. Then, we will need to identify the barriers currently preventing that goal from being achieved. With a clear overview of the whole system, we can strategize specific solutions to tackle each area identified. We must be diligent in committing to a plan knowing some barriers may take longer than others. It takes time to move the needle to change what has been historically low representation, but it is not impossible.

At the root of all these efforts is the shared belief that these types of changes are necessary to achieve the best version of our City to be most reflective of the communities that make it the Naperville it is today.

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?

I fully support the paid family leave policy that was passed in January 2020, as it was more comprehensive and fair to City workers than it had been in the past. In addition, it will be necessary to revisit the policy as we review ongoing recruitment and retention efforts, especially as workforce trends evolve. While twelve weeks can feel like a substantial amount of time following the birth or arrival of a child, we know recovery times can vary dramatically, and returning to work too early can lead to mental and physical health repercussions. The United States is the only high-income nation in the world without Paid Parental Leave despite a plethora of research and data from other countries illuminating both the fiscal impact and the benefits to the workforce and their families. It would be worthwhile to examine the existing research more closely and develop a plan to expand our leave policies further.

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.

The Library Board's responsibilities include the library's budget and policies, not the day-to-day operations of the Library. While collection development and material selection are tied to the budget, they should remain the responsibility of the Library's Executive Team and the library employees. The Library Board should be focused on ensuring that

policies and budget align with the Library’s purpose statement: “Naperville Public Library nurtures lifelong learning, fosters community connections, and provides equitable access to diverse resources in a welcoming and inclusive environment.” Any appointee to the Library Board must understand their role as a trustee and pledge to uphold the Library’s Purpose in all their decision-making.

One overall recommendation would be to provide all City Commissions and Boards with the same onboarding overview of the City to ensure every appointee has a clear understanding of their duties.

Josh McBroom

No response received.

Ashley South

Website: <https://ashleysouth.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?

1. In the 2023 budget, there is only \$40,000 allocated for training and external events. City council can help to better implement the city’s diversity goals by increasing this amount in future budgets and also getting creative with bringing in business partners to support or sponsor community events. Federal and state grants may be available and applied for to assist.

2. Staff should reflect our community in order to better serve our citizens. Police and Fire make up the greatest number of city employees. We took a step in the right direction by removing the application fee for the police department. We need to start by reviewing the internal practices of hiring like what was done with the police application. From there, we need to ensure proper internal diversity support and training to ensure we retain and grow the investment we have made. Attract, retain, grow.

3. In 2018, the city reviewed its hiring relative to the DuPage County labor pool statistics. They identified underutilization in the following categories: Male/White Administrative Support Male/Hispanic Skilled Craft Male/Black Protective Services (sworn) Male/Asian Technician Female/White Professional and Skilled Craft Female/Black Protective

Services (sworn) Female/Asian Technician (source: <https://www.naperville.il.us/careers/>)
While on City Council, I will ask that this be reviewed against open positions and a rubric be created so the city can review applications with their own stated goals in mind.

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?

1. Outside of the union employees that may have their own respective agreements on things like sick leave all employees are subject to the same Maternity/New Parent Leave Policy.
2. For sick time, the policy feels on par with what I have seen in corporate settings.
3. For the Maternity/New Parent Policy, I would encourage the city to do two things:
 - (a) Adopt a universal New Parent Policy like many companies are adopting today. The structure of the language places the mother at the center of the child care duties and bonding with additional leave it. Those aspects are important for BOTH parents.
 - (b) Include adoption in the 12-week policy. The needs of an adopted child in a household are in some ways more critical. I draw no distinction between someone birthing a child and needing to bond with him/her than someone bringing a new baby/toddler/teen home to a new environment.

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.

1. I support the 1st Amendment and I support diversity of thought and reflection of our community. I look to lessons learned in Fahrenheit 451 and 1984 to guide my decision making about books. Historically banning books has been associated with authoritarian regimes and restricted rights of its citizens. We must use reason and data to look at policies. Most ideas and dogma are not presented in a fully transparent way.
2. We need books that stretch our thinking and expand on perspective. Perspective provides empathy or at least understanding.
3. Critical thinking is paramount to an educated and engaged populous. Learn to think for yourself and not be afraid to ask questions. The human condition is a complicated one.

4. My approval to the board will look for folks who support education and free thinking, especially in supporting minority groups that need our help, support and advocacy to create a thriving and empathetic intellectually community in Naperville.

Ashfaq Syed

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?

I am an active resident of Naperville and passionate about making a difference in the city that I am proud to call home. One of our shared values is recognizing the need for diverse perspectives at all levels of decision making. All members of our community deserve a seat at the table. If I am elected by the people of Naperville, our City Council will be closer to reflecting the rich cultural diversity of our city, which is one of our greatest strengths as a community.

I will create and track diversity recruiting KPIs, Reach out to underrepresented candidates, Launch a mentoring program for diverse talent when they join and Create an inclusive recruiting and interview process.

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?

I support the current paid leave policy for city employees. Reward and Compensation are very important for any employees and Jan 2020 policy to include 12 weeks of paid leave was an excellent decision. Maturity Leave – should be a standard number of weeks, assuming no complications. Personal leave - Mental health of the individual and would be on a person to person basis...

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.

Role of the board is oversight from strategic direction for the library, to support the staff and make recommendations to improve the library system. It is not our job to determine which books go on the bookshelves. We have expert trained staff who handle this on a regular basis.

Jodi Trendler

Website: <https://www.jodi4naperville.com/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/Jodi4Naperville/>

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?

I am happy to note that the candidates in the upcoming elections in April show more diversity than any election I can remember! I urge the AAUW to research each candidate and look for those with demonstrated experience leading change in the community, and with a solid understanding of how City government functions. Having leadership that reflects our values is one key step in ensuring fair and balanced hiring practices.

Changes are needed to make our community more connected, and our new DEI Manager Dr. Williams has been doing commendable work toward this effort. We need to celebrate diversity by improving city communication and support for the various cultural and charity groups around the city. Regarding hiring, the city follows status quo, limited communication for openings, making it more difficult to bring in diverse job applicants. We need to leverage local groups in Will and DuPage county that specialize in job placement across all groups. Additional training in interviewing and hiring practices may be needed. If issues with unfair hiring remain, those must be dealt with through employee correction action up to and including dismissal.

Further, city council needs to do a better job at listening to the community. Departments within the city do a great job at meeting the public, through events such as 'Chat with the Chief'. Currently each council member represents the entire city, with most members living downtown in District 203. Perhaps localized districts of representation would be a more effective and balanced means of representation.

Lastly, Naperville must create a vision for mixed use development that focuses on putting people first. Proper mixed use strategies blur lines of class and economic distinction that result in economic benefit for all. This is perhaps the most powerful tool of improving diversity and inclusion, but is also one of the most difficult.

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?

Paid leave is an important benefit to all city staff. I support the changes made in 2020 for maternal and paternal leave. However, paid leave is only one aspect of employee compensation and retention. I'm concerned that salary paid to city staff may not be at

market rates, and look forward to the results of the upcoming rate study. The implication is that new recruits join the staff to receive training and then leave for more money. I would request a review of the total compensation and benefits, not only mapped to other cities, but to employers in the area.

I believe city staff should be rewarded for performance tied to the goals in the city strategic plan. I also believe in performance improvement plans and training. We need the best team possible to serve the city.

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.

The Board must continue to support and ensure the mission for our library is upheld, and develop policies and procedures to support it if threatened.

“Naperville Public Library is committed to providing materials, services, and programs that represent a wide array of cultures and experiences so that all members of the community feel included and represented.”

I strongly support AAUW and Naperville Public Library’s mission. As a lifelong learner myself, I know how valuable this type of resource can be. We are fortunate to have a library staff and Board that already do an excellent job of ensuring a diverse selection of materials are available, City Council needs to ensure this standard is maintained. The Board must be made up of process minded individuals that reflect our community profile to the extent possible. I support the strong management practices noted on the AAUW website. Processes related to content development and material review are critical to supporting that mission and giving citizens a voice in maintaining the critical community resource. The City Council must review and hold Board members accountable.

Madhu Uppal

Website: <https://uppalfornaperville.com/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/UppalForNaperville>

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?

As the city grows more diverse, the city government and offices ought to come closer to reflect this diversity. The first step would be to inventory/survey the current staff to get an accurate picture of the current status. Leadership of each department would be the next person (s) to share its hiring practices and what challenges it has faced in achieving this goal. Outreach to the underrepresented communities through social, cultural and religious institutions as well educational institutions, could help find ways to encourage interest in city positions. Having each department report on the actions taken and the progress made toward reaching these targets would be the next logical step. This is a difficult process and without making each department accountable the goals of diversity would remain unfulfilled.

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?

The paid leave policy for city employees has, no doubt, been designed after significant input from HR consultants and professionals and is in keeping with what other similar municipalities offer their employees. I would need to first understand the basis and the rationale for the current policies before making any suggestions or offering directions to HR.

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.

Public Library Board of Trustees is charged with overseeing the operations of the library system and expenditures of all library funds. Having served as a trustee of Naperville Library Board, I fully agree with the Illinois Public Library Trustee Manual (2016) that library directors and their delegated staff are responsible for the selection of library materials. Materials selected by them are considered to be selected by the board. Trustees of the board should not have any personal involvement in collection development and/or material selection.

Nathan “Nate” Wilson

No response received.