

Lenexa City Council 2021

Response ID:12 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Melanie Arroyo

2. Candidate for Ward

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3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 12732 W 88th Cir. Apt. 203

City/State/Zip : Lenexa

4. Phone Number

9137107972

5. Email Address

melanie2kc@gmail.com

6. Campaign Website

www.Melanie4Lenexa.com

2. Candidate Background

7. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

Bilingual clinical counselor and art therapist previously employed at Wyandot Center, Safehome, and currently practicing at UMKC and in private practice.

8. If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held.

None

9. Other recent political/community experience (50 words or less)

Currently Democratic Precinct Committeewoman in Lenexa Precinct 3-05. Also served as field director for Susan Ruiz's 2018 and 2020 campaigns, endorsed by Run For Something & scored 100% on Mainstream Coalition's MAINPAC survey.

3. Issues and Policy

10. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (100 words or less)

Expand CIT in Public Safety: I will support solutions directed at removing the task of responding to mental health crisis situations from the police department, and place it in the hands of trained mental health professionals instead. While I would support such a shift in responsibilities, I will NOT support defunding the Lenexa Police Department.

Community and Inclusion: Support thriving multicultural small businesses, promoting language accessibility, and celebrating our community's diversity through festivals and the arts.

Property Taxes Relief:
To make Lenexa livable for everyone, it's imperative to keep residential property taxes low.

11. What are your views on the services and value Lenexa's citizens receive for their local tax dollars? (100 words or less)

In Lenexa, we get a good value of our tax dollars as evidenced by having beautiful parks, reliable road repair and maintenance, a thriving city center, and well-maintained pools. Nonetheless, I understand that my neighbors' collective views are important to consider, because in our conversations I've been made aware of the need to improve some resources in our community that have been around for a while, including the Lenexa Senior Center, and to offer tax incentives to civically minded projects that promote affordable housing instead of granting these to large companies.

12. What changes, if any, would you like to see to the City budget? (100 words or less)

I would have voted for the city's 2022 budgets as it stands. Over the long term, I would like to reduce the tax burden on Lenexa's property owners and businesses through more careful targeting of tax incentives to broaden the tax base. I would also like to see more investments in our neighborhoods in the form of public aquatic facilities, parks, trails, and transportation. In addition, I would support allocating extra funds to improve data encryption in all local government-owned technology, and conduct an internal safety assessment in order to avoid the possibility of a ransomware attack.

13. What role, if any, do you believe the City should play in economic development to bring jobs and capital investment to the community? (100 words or less)

Lenexa has a role to play in creating the spaces for entrepreneurship to succeed, and in trying to attract new businesses. Lenexa has done a good job in creating spaces for new small businesses, such as Lenexa Public Market, and I would encourage and support such efforts. I believe we should be encouraging the growth of small businesses over the zero-sum game of trying to attract the successful businesses of other communities. Therefore, I believe we should carefully limit tax subsidies for large businesses so as to maintain an environment where a broad tax base means lower taxes for everyone.

14. As the City considers future development and redevelopment projects, describe your views on how the City should best manage and balance growth? (100 words or less)

While talking with neighbors in the east side of Lenexa, many of them have expressed concern due to removal of important resources. While an argument can be made as to why these services had to be moved (the police station and the library), the reality is that Lenexans in ward 3 want these resources to be replaced with something useful to the emerging families and empty-nesters, instead of empty buildings without a foreseeable purpose. Thankfully, the city is considering replacing the police station with a fire station, but hopefully we can continue this trend for other empty spaces.

15. What is your philosophy on the role the City should play in terms of metro-area issues? (100 words or less)

Lenexa must seek partnerships and also be a partner for other local governments. On issues like the JoCo Gateway, our transportation infrastructure plays a crucial role in the metro area. I would like to see more partnerships like Climate Action KC, where we can advance a green agenda in our city and set an example for the metro area. I would also like to see Lenexa partner up with other cities to address the limited power that cities have when it comes to affordable housing in the state of Kansas.

16. What do you believe the takeaways for the City should be, if any, from the COVID-19 pandemic experience? (100 words or less)

COVID represented both a great challenge and big opportunity for Lenexa. It revealed the city's strength with the online businesses of the future in terms of warehouses and logistics. It also pointed toward a future of lower retail space needs. But more than anything, I believe COVID taught us the value, and the necessity, of strong community ties and how much we depend on each other.

17. What do you believe are the greatest challenges Lenexa faces over the next ten years and how would you address them? (100 words or less)

The biggest challenges Lenexa faces are dealing with its East-West divide, managing development, infrastructure, climate change, and managing the city's growing diversity in an inclusionary way. To deal with the East-West divide, investments in each section must be split equitably. To manage development, we must minimize tax giveaways to make development good for everyone. On infrastructure, we must make wise, climate-friendly long-term investments. And to handle growing diversity, we must elect leadership that reflects Lenexa's growing diversity.

18. Why are you seeking this public office? (100 words or less)

Representation in City Council is an important goal for me. Given the conversations about issues of equality and diversity in the past year, it is only predictable that these conversations will be ongoing and we need to have courageous dialogue about equality in our city. In addition, my background as a mental health professional inspires me to want to advocate for initiatives to expand the CIT with the Lenexa PD and other first responders, more mental health counseling resources across the schools, and resources for the families of Lenexa.

19. What do you believe makes you uniquely qualified to serve on the City Council and most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (100 words or less)

I believe that my immigrant background and identity as a woman of color is a much needed perspective in Lenexa's city council. According to Census Data, 20% of Lenexans identify as non-White, but our city council is not representative of these demographics. My profession as a mental health counselor provides me with unique and necessary skills to bring to the table. I want members of my community to feel heard with empathy, dignity, and respect. Politics today can often get overheated, but I believe I am well-positioned to bring the temperature down.