

# Mayor and/or City Council 2021

Response ID:42 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

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### 1. Candidate Name

Ben Chociej

### 2. Candidate for Ward # (if applicable)

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### 3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 5136 W 60th Ter

City/State/Zip : Mission, KS 66205

### 4. Phone Number

8163327985

### 5. Email Address

ben@benformission.com

### 6. Campaign Website

benformission.com

## 2. Candidate Background

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

I have worked as a software engineer for the past ten years, most of which I've spent with startups.

### 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)

I currently serve on the Mission Parks Recreation & Trees Commission, as part of which I was on the Mohawk Park steering committee.

## 3. Issues and Policy

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

1. Strong & sustainable development patterns. Mission has a bright future ahead, and now is the time to cement that future by supporting development that will encourage walkability, new businesses & residents, and increased tax base

2. Infrastructure - much of our infrastructure is aging and in need of maintenance. Getting ahead of these expenses will be critical.

3. Sustainability - Mission must be a leader in responding to climate and sustainability challenges. Promoting policies, practices, and development projects that reduce carbon emissions and effect good stewardship of our planet will be vital to

Mission's continued success.

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

Mission currently provides outstanding city services for the citizen's tax dollar, including responsive public works, sanitation, neighborhood services, etc. Still, good management of city finances, promotion of fiscally strong development patterns, and careful planning around maintenance and infrastructure improvements are things Mission must continue to do well as our facilities and infrastructure age in order to be good stewards of public funds.

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

Generally, I think the Mission budget is appropriate as it stands. I would like to see maintenance and replacement of infrastructure and equipment planned more holistically and methodically to avoid emergency expenses and piece-by-piece replacements and repairs. Likewise, energy and other efficiency improvements can help reduce costs while bolstering our sustainability efforts. To that end, I am very enthusiastic about the city's recent adoption of measures related to the Facility Conservation Improvement Program

**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)**

Supporting strong, fiscally sustainable development & construction patterns should be the top concern in how Mission can grow in both jobs and capital investment. Projects that stimulate business growth, residential growth, walkability, and sustainability will "snowball" - as Mission each such project is completed, Mission becomes that much more attractive for future investment. Along those lines, marketing and branding our city well (which staff & council have recently begun tackling) and investing in parks and amenities will pay dividends in terms of attracting growth and investment of many kinds.

**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)**

Encouraging development of core "main street" parcels that are currently under-used or disused will be a force multiplier in terms of growing the tax base. Those revenues will be vital to balance the city's growing infrastructure needs in our more residential, less dense areas. Aside from that, continuing to use a very discerning eye when it comes to tax incentives will be critical. The "new normal" for tax incentives is that the city needs to get something substantial in return - infrastructure improvements, affordable residential units, public amenities, etc. Tax giveaways merely in the name of development ought to end.

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

Mission is relatively centrally located and relatively in comparison to many neighboring cities. In the name of unifying sustainability efforts, interconnecting our trails and amenities, efficiently using tax dollars, and promoting growth rather than competing for it, continuing to work with our neighboring cities is a strong strategy. Active participation in MARC and other metro-wide efforts and bodies should be a goal for staff & council where appropriate. Many of the goals we want to see achieved can only be achieved through interlocal cooperation.

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

Two major takeaways come to mind, and to credit current staff and council, they have been well addressed so far.

First, readiness for operating the city government and appropriate city remotely should be as much as part of our preparedness plans as anything else.

Second, specifically having preparedness planning for public health events and emergencies should continue to be a focus.

Otherwise, the COVID-19 pandemic also serves as a good reminder that our budget revenues can vary wildly without warning. Sales taxes and parks & rec revenues in particular are very responsive to events like the pandemic.

**17. What do you believe are the greatest challenges the City faces over the next ten years and how would you address**

**them? (100 words or less)**

Sustainability and ensuring good development patterns are the biggest challenges facing us. Fortunately, they are also opportunities to grow and thrive if done well. Continuing to promote energy efficiency improvements, sustainability programs, walkability, and reduction in vehicle miles would be benchmarks of my efforts on the council if elected. Likewise, continuing to see main street parcels developed into strong, dynamic projects that support the same goals are of critical importance and among the chief reasons I am running for office.

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

Mission is at a critical point in its municipal timeline. We are at the intersection of growing maintenance & infrastructure efforts, increasing interest in redevelopment, pandemic recovery, and a looming climate crisis. We are also uniquely positioned, geographically and philosophically, to meet these challenges synergistically. I am running for office to keep the city's momentum on these issues and push us forward even further, as I think in many cases there is no time to waste, and while we need to act in a timely fashion, we also need to delivery quality to our citizens as we do so.

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

Ever since moving to Mission and starting a family here, I have made a priority of getting involved with city happenings. Serving on the Parks Recreation & Trees Commission, we've spearheaded a number of improvements both big and small. One of the larger accomplishments I'm proud of is the master planning for Mohawk Park which is now coming to fruition. But I've made a point of attending many, many meetings and establishing relationships with current staff and council to understand how Mission works and how it could do better. I'm ready to jump in and do my part.

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