

# Overland Park Mayor 2021

Response ID:6 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

### 1. Candidate Name

Faris Farassati

### 2. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 12704 Woodson St

City/State/Zip : Overland Park

### 3. Phone Number

9136456811

### 4. Email Address

farisforop@gmail.com

### 5. Campaign Website

farisforop.com

## 2. Candidate Background

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

Council member, City of Overland Park, 2017-Current

Cancer Scientist, Kansas City Veterans Affairs Medical Center, 2015-Current

Cancer Scientist, KUMC, 2008-2015

Cancer Scientist, UMN, 2001-2008

### 7. Please list political, community and business organizations with whom you have been affiliated and any leadership positions you have held.

City of Overland Park, KS: Council member

Arts & Recreation Foundation of OP: Board member

Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation: Director

Turnberry HOA: President & Board member

## 3. Issues and Policy

### 8. List your top three policy issues? (100 words or less)

1-Fiscal responsibility: Preventing unnecessary and wasteful tax giveaways

2-Promoting the voice of the people at city Hall

3-Promoting an evidence-based government free of the pressure of lobbyists

My plans for OP, named as OP2025, is now released on my website (farisforop.com) and facebook@farisforop.

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

There is certainly a value that they receive thanks to the hard work of the staff of the city. However, the extensive tax giveaways are detrimental to this value and need to be stopped.

**10. Regarding the City's budget, a 1-mill property tax increase to fund the recommendations of the Mental Health Task Force has been proposed for 2022. Do you support the task for recommendations? Do you support increasing the mill levy for this purpose? Discuss why/why not and how you would fund the recommendations if you support them but not the mill levy increase. (100 words or less)**

As a medical scientist surely appreciate the importance of mental health. However, it is my belief funding for this task force should be done in a logical and evidence-based manner. Alternative solutions other than raising are not researched. Also, I would like to see a mechanistic guarantee that any revenue will only fund public safety. Finally, other departments in our police force such as crime fighting units suffer from lack of staff. We need to allow some of this funding to cover for those areas. This could come from partial funding of the mental health task force.

**11. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the City's proposed budget for 2022?**

1-No funding for chipseal and using the available budget for other high quality technology such as inch and half overlay.  
2- Complete stop of allowance for Tax incentives other than verified blight. This is not exactly a budget item but influences budget tremendously.  
3-A level of planning towards 2023 funding for an independent Economic Development Council(EDC) in the five year financial plan. Current structure of EDC is not serving the best interest of the people of Overland Park.

**12. 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)**

One of my priorities is to establish an independent Economic Development Council(EDC). The current EDC is heavily influenced by the chamber of commerce, which is a lobbyist entity. Therefore the EDC can not serve at its optimal capacity to all businesses of Overland Park. Additionally funding the EDC with tax payers dollars while functioning under a lobbyist group may not be the most beneficial path for economic development for OP. As an example EDC has not been able to efficiently help small and local businesses and seems to be focused on benefitting developers. We would like to change this dynamics.

**13. 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)**

- Making decision on an evidence-based manner beyond the pressure of special interest groups
- Redirecting tax dollars to public services and amenities
- Paying attention to the quality of life, enhancing city services
- Preventing overdevelopment, promoting availability of a range of housing that satisfies the needs of our next generation.
- Promoting small and local businesses.

**14. 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)**

We all love OP but we should not close our eyes to upcoming challenges. Increased cost of maintenance, increase need for public services such as schools, safety, parks, libraries, growing population, the need for workforce housing, worsening traffic, invasion of tax-incentivized luxury unaffordable apartments, constant overwriting of existing zoning ordinances resulting in damage to the quality of life in neighborhoods are some of such challenges. Growing demand of the people of OP for transparency and accountability and logical use of tax dollars to remedy above mentioned priorities has been focal points of my efforts during the last four years.

**15. Do you believe the current city manager form of government we have is appropriate for Overland Park or would you favor a "strong mayor" form of government? (100 words or less)**

This terminology "strong mayor", "weak mayor" is obsolete and irrelevant to the new format of local government in the year 2021. While mayor should have a people-based vision for the city, the model that I pursue is an evidence-based government which is not based on the "strength" of a single character hence "the Mayor". It is based on the strength of an evidence driven system that makes logical and research oriented decisions in support of what people of Overland Park want to see in their city.

**16. It is estimated that replacing chip seal road resurfacing with a method similar to surrounding cities will cost more than \$20 million per year. Do you favor eliminating the chip seal process, and if so, how would you pay for the increased cost?**

**(100 words or less)**

That estimation is inaccurate and nothing but propaganda from status quo in order to ignore the 16 years demand of the people of Overland Park to be free from this health and safety hazard named chipseal. With a fraction of that cost we can deploy the overlay system same as Leawood, the cost is very reasonable and we can easily fit it in our current budget if the will to listen to people existed. Additionally once we stop giving millions of dollars of our taxes to developers additional resources will be available for such important issues.

**17. What specific proposals do you have to support the goal of providing access to affordable housing throughout the City? (100 words or less)**

Municipalities can employ a range of mechanisms to promote affordable housing including:

- House Finance Authority (e.g. Los Angeles),
- Establishing Acceleration Funds to help workforce housing projects (such as San Francisco).
- Establishing a linkage fee (e.g. Seattle) where a per-square-foot fee is on developers which will be used to support workforce housing.

Other possibilities include lease-to-own programs(Cleveland), models promoting environmental sustainability as a path to term affordability (Minneapolis), and projects that connect community resources (e.g. day cares) to housing. Johnson county has also completed a study resulting in a tool kit. Overland Park has employed NONE of these mechanisms so far.

**18. Since its founding in 1960, Overland Park leaders have had a long history of visionary planning. What do you believe the City should do today to ensure the City's prosperity for the next 60-years? (100 words or less)**

The government of OP needs to align its priorities with the priorities of its people and free itself from the pressure of lobbyists. This is achievable by promoting a decision-making process based on logics and research and not indoctrination and redirecting tax dollars to items that have highest public benefit.

**19. Do you believe the City of Overland Park is headed in the right direction?**

There are surely many great features of our city that we all love. However making sure that they will be there for our next generation is a different topic. I know that people of Overland Park are heading the right direction by voicing their opinion , demanding reform, getting involved and raising so many qualified candidate against the status quo.

**20. How would your service as Mayor of Overland Park differ from the current mayor?**

- I will listen to the voice of the people.
- I will not use my vote to hand over millions of dollars of their tax dollars to undeserving developers damaging funding to schools, parks, libraries, and public safety services.
- I will promote inclusivity in the council by allowing the voice of opposition
- I will support our first responders not by words but by my vote. The same way that I tried to establish hazard pay for them and the same mayor blocked it.
- I will be receptive to new ideas.

**21. Do you believe the City of Overland Park City Council is responsive to the needs of the community? What is your approach to governance?**

There are certainly areas that the council is responsive to the needs of the community such as our public safety machinery and our parks and recreation facilities. There are also areas that the council has ignored the needs and voice of the community such as fiscal responsibility, zoning issues, chipseal issue, toll lane on highway 69, illogical removal of traffic lights causing crashes on 91st street and the repeal of BSL.

**22. Why are you seeking this public office?**

I am an immigrant to this beautiful country. I have received nothing but kindness from this nation including education at top institutes such as Harvard and Mayo Clinic and a comfortable life for my family. My wife, as a gastroenterologist at KUMC, is also a beneficiary to all these opportunities. In return, I wanted to go one step beyond my usual career as a cancer scientist to

pay back and help keep OP the same beautiful city for our kids. Local government is a perfect fit for me to accomplish some of these goals due to its non-partisan nature.

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

During the last 4 years as a councilmember, I have been with the people of OP in all four corners of this city listening to their concerns and working with them to find a solution. I have been their voice on the council, from the issue about Arboretum to down town's former Santa-Fe park, from their concerns about projects that were threatening the quality of life in south OP all the way to the Brookridge Golf course radical transformation.

I have supported people's demand for fiscal responsibility, logical use of tax dollars, responsible use of COVID money and banning Chipseal!