

Mayor and/or City Council 2021

Response ID:40 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Sollie Flora

2. Candidate for Ward # (if applicable)

3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 6501 Maple Drive
City/State/Zip : Mission, KS 66202

4. Phone Number

913-735-4882

5. Email Address

SollieFloraKS@gmail.com

6. Campaign Website

<https://sollieformission.com/>

2. Candidate Background

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

I am an in-house attorney (Legal Counsel North America) at Corbion in Lenexa, KS.

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.

I am a member of the Northeast Johnson County Chamber.

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

I am currently a Councilmember in Mission (Ward 4). I also a Westwood Hills Planning Commissioner (Non-Resident Member). In addition, I have recently served in leadership roles with Climate Action KC, and I am a past Board Member of Safehome.

3. Issues and Policy

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

My top three policy issues are: (1) improved streets and parks (building a strong foundation by delivering on core services for our residents, businesses, and visitors); (2) meaningful citizen engagement (fostering opportunities for our community members to meaningfully engage on city issues); and (3) sustainable growth (promoting equity and environmental sustainability so that we're stronger today and ready for tomorrow).

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

I believe that Mission residents and businesses receive a high value of services for their local tax dollars. We are smart about spending vs. savings - our fund balance in our general reserve fund helped us to weather COVID-19. The City consistently

receives high marks in citizen surveys, although there is still always room for improvement. We need to leverage our available dollars (with matching funds, low interest bonds, etc.) to make sure that first and foremost we are doing as much as possible to improve core services, like streets and parks.

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

The number one change I would like to see to the City budget relates to process. Although we hold public hearings on the budget, public participation is often low. Therefore, I would like to see the City work to more meaningfully engage the public in the budget process, since we are public servants working on their behalf. On the substantive side, we need to continue to find ways to direct more funds to deferred infrastructure and maintenance projects. We have decades of deferred maintenance on streets, stormwater, parks, etc. and now we are faced with playing emergency catch up.

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)

I believe the City should play an active role in economic development to bring jobs and capital investment to the community. The key to this is meaningful communication and cooperation with our local business partners, including the Mission Business District and the NEJC Chamber. As a land-locked, mostly developed city, we have to look for redevelopment opportunities that will continue to provide growth and move Mission forward. In addition, we need to continue to show interested parties that Mission is where they want to be by being a welcoming community and creating smooth pathways for bringing solid projects forward.

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)

The City should best manage and balance growth by first and foremost being intentional in its planning. I currently serve on the Steering Committee for our overdue Comprehensive Plan update, which governs land use for the City and seeks to answer the question: What do we want Mission to look like in 2040? We have to be cognizant of and responsive to the desires of current Mission residents, but must also be forward-looking. To be able to continue to provide the level of services our residents expect and deserve, I believe that we must be open to increased density.

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

Regional cooperation is necessary and Mission can and should be a leader on important metro-area issues. Mission is not an island, and we can't put blinders on and ignore regional and national issues while pretending that's to our benefit. Prioritizing Mission's interests means working with others to solve problems on a more efficient/effective basis. A great example is Climate Action KC, where I've held leadership roles. The new Climate Action Plan tackles climate change on a regional scale, but recognizes each city will work the plan in a way that makes sense for itself while moving toward regional goals.

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

The top takeaways for Mission from the COVID-19 pandemic experience are: (1) we're all in this together and we need to make sure we're always focused on how we can better serve and protect the most vulnerable members of Mission; (2) quality city staff matters and we need to continue to value and respect our employees so that we retain our amazing public servants; and (3) responsible fiscal policy (i.e. reserve general fund balance) got us through the pandemic and will enable the city to weather economic downturns in the future; (4) regional cooperation and state/federal advocacy make a difference.

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)

I believe that the greatest challenges Mission faces over the next ten years are: (1) deferred infrastructure and maintenance, particularly streets and stormwater; (2) the accelerating impacts of climate change; and (3) limited development/redevelopment opportunities as a land-locked city (including the stalled, privately-owned Gateway redevelopment). As Mayor, I will work closely with Council and our wonderful City staff to name these challenges and face them head on with common sense and innovative solutions. We know that with Mission's small size, regional cooperation and collaborative solutions will be a must in addressing these challenges.

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

I am running for Mayor to cement Mission's forward progress. I love Mission, and during my time as a Councilmember I've been a strong advocate for our City at the regional, state, and national levels. I've also worked to ensure that we are building an equitable and sustainable city that is ready to meet the challenges we face and have built a track record of policy wins and results while in office. As Mayor, I will be a strong leader who will continue to work collaboratively to advance Mission's interests and deliver on the issues that matter most to residents.

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)

My professional background as an attorney has enabled me to gain skills that serve me well in local government. I believe my vision, communication & leadership skills, cooperative approach, work ethic, transparency, credibility, and policy track record make me uniquely qualified to serve as Mayor of Mission. The following three things most distinguish me from my opponent: (1) my focus on policy solutions; (2) my ability to provide straightforward, clear explanations of my positions so that Mission residents know where I stand and how I am advocating on their behalf; and (3) my work with regional, state, and national leaders.