

Overland Park City Council 2021

Response ID:25 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Roger Tarbuton

2. Address

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5. Campaign Website

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2. Candidate Background

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

I retired from Johnson County Government after 30 years as legal counsel for various county departments. I currently serve on Empire Estates HOA Board.

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

I currently serve on the Empire Estates HOA Board. I am a former President of the County Counselors Association of Kansas.

3. Issues and Policy

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

Residents should be encouraged to participate at committee meetings as many outcome determining decisions are made at the committee level.

The construction of high-rise apartments next to single family residential neighborhoods should be discouraged as they are incompatible under the current zoning regulations and the Golden case.

The City needs to hold the line against increased real estate taxes by eliminating wasteful spending and eliminating unnecessary tax incentives which reduce the tax base and place taxpayer funds at risk.

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

The City needs to improve on reducing wasteful spending and protecting the tax base:

Last fall the council approved spending \$350,000. in Covid-relief funds for a video streaming system at the youth soccer complex. Fortunately, this ill-conceived proposal was rescinded by the council after public outcry.

Tax incentives in the amount of \$200 million dollars for the first phase of the Brookridge Golf Course project were approved by the council in 2019. This sum is 2/3 the entire 2020 OP budget and will require years (if ever) to recover. It shifts the tax burden from private businesses to individual homeowners.

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)

I agree with the task force recommendations but do not believe a mill levy increase is necessary. Nearly every year the city council is called upon to make difficult decisions to prioritize among many competing budgetary interests. A major city of over 200,000 residents with an annual budget in excess of \$300 million dollars should be able to absorb the cost of the task force recommendations through cost savings rather than raising the mill levy.

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

I would like to see the following changes:

1. Reduction in staff reliance on highly paid outside consultants for work that can be completed in-house.
2. Examination of each line item for opportunities to eliminate wasteful spending and reprioritise to reduce expenditures on obsolete projects.
3. Reduce reliance on tax incentives for developments that reduce the tax base and only benefit the developers bottom line.

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)

Historically, OP has been able to attract plenty of new development and jobs as a result of its excellent infrastructure and police and fire protection without granting tax incentives. Priority should be granted to maintaining and developing these amenities which benefit residents and business interests alike. OP should continue to work closely with local businesses, educational institutions, not-for-profits and the Chamber of Commerce to attract new businesses.

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)

In mature suburban neighborhoods like those north of I-435, mixed-use development and high-rise apartments must be congruent in scope and appearance with surrounding residential neighborhoods in order to comply with current zoning regulations and the compatibility requirement established in the Golden case. During the planning process, I favor the preservation of as much green space as possible to minimize the impact of increased traffic, noise, pollution and storm-water run-off to surrounding neighborhoods.

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)

Unless carefully managed, increased urbanization and high-density growth will result in increased traffic, crime, noise and deteriorating infrastructure becoming the greatest challenge for OP. The best way to manage this growth is to employ comprehensive planning, acquire new parks and green space and apply zoning regulations strictly in order to protect the integrity of existing neighborhoods. During the past 10 years, the city council and planning commission have become overly concerned with enticing new development at all cost through the use of tax incentives at the expense of residential taxpayers and single-family neighborhoods.

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)

I would be opposed to adopting a strong mayor form of government because it concentrates too much authority in one person. It is my understanding that in that form of government the mayor exercises sole authority to hire and fire the city manager and other city department heads.

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)

The use of chip-seal to maintain residential streets is disliked by residents. Most local municipalities have dropped its use or are transitioning away from it. It is time that OP seriously address the issue rather than ignoring it. Estimates differ on how much chip-seal alternatives will cost. Every year the city council is called upon to make difficult decisions to prioritize needs among many competing budgetary interests. A city of over 200,000 residents with an annual budget in excess of \$300 million dollars should be able to absorb the cost of transitioning away from chip-seal without raising the mill levy.

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

OP zoning regulations currently allow for the construction of affordable housing such as duplexes, triplexes and patio homes. I opposed the development of high-rise apartments next to single family residential neighborhoods in Ward 2 such as Ranchmart South due to the increased traffic and the negative impact it would have on adjoining neighborhoods. Ward 2 already has a significant number of apartments some of which include subsidized housing. Tax incentives should be used to rehabilitate distressed housing stock and not for the construction of high-rise luxury apartments which only drive rents higher.

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)

I think Forward OP and endeavors like it can glean valuable citizen insight for long-term visionary planning and I generally agree with its goals and objectives. However, it is my understanding that in at least some cases, leaders selected to "guide the process" were biased and guided discussions in favor of their own preferred outcomes. The unbiased input of all residents of OP is essential for the success of future visionary planning.

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

I am concerned about the direction the city is headed related to the granting of tax incentives. OP needs private development to promote employment and the private amenities we all enjoy. However, in recent years, OP has overused tax incentives that were originally enacted to rehabilitate distressed properties for the development of greenfield property such as granting \$200 million dollars in tax incentives for the first phase of the Brookridge Golf Course project. This is approximately 2/3 the entire 2021 OP budget and will require many years (if ever) to recover while shifting the tax burden to individual homeowners.

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

It is the job of the city council to look out for the residents of Overland Park and respond to their questions in a timely manner. When I first ran for city council in 2019, I was appalled that residents were forced to hold up signs at city council meetings to express their opinion and advocated the adoption of a public comment period. Although a public comment period was eventually adopted, similar opportunities should be provided for residents to speak at committee meetings where many outcome determining decisions are also made.

21. Why are you seeking this public office?

I am confident I have the interest, educational background and experience to make positive contributions to the future of Overland Park.

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

I bring 30 years of experience handling local government issues from working for Johnson County Government. I worked as legal counsel for various county departments including Johnson County-Med Act, Johnson County Mental Health and Johnson County Wastewater. I interacted with staff, elected officials and the general public on a daily basis handling a variety of legal issues. I am the only candidate in this race who grew up in Johnson County, attended local schools and universities and who has extensive local government experience.