

# Mayor and/or City Council 2021

Response ID:77 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

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### 1. Candidate Name

Dean Vakas

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

At-Large

### 3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 15954 S MUR-LEN RD #256

City/State/Zip : Olathe, KS 66062

### 4. Phone Number

913-390-3399

### 5. Email Address

info@vakasforolathe.com

### 6. Campaign Website

<https://www.vakasforolathe.com/>

## 2. Candidate Background

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

Retired U.S. Army Colonel & Retired Chief Operating Officer, Kansas State University Olathe Campus

### 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.

Member, Olathe Chamber of Commerce; Education Committee Chair, Heartland Roundtable Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals; Kansas President, National Defense Transportation Association; Member, American Planning Association; Graduate, Olathe Chamber's Leadership Olathe Program

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

Chair, Olathe Planning Commission; Board Member, Olathe Library System; President, Olathe Citizens Association; Member, Johnson County Housing for All Task Force; Member, Olathe 2040 Strategic Plan Community Advisory Committee; Member, Veterans Community Project Honor Corps; Board Member, Johnson County Animal Response Team; Member, Saint Dionysios Greek Orthodox Church

## 3. Issues and Policy

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

Responsible Fiscal Leadership, Public Safety, and Modernized Infrastructure are my top three priorities. Municipal spending in all of its forms must be continuously scrutinized. Public Safety translates to Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS). It is always job #1. Every Olathean should be and feel personally safe. Infrastructure includes a breadth of activities, but it is key that we proactively improve and expand street infrastructure, rather than playing catch-up to the disadvantage of

residents. City-wide decisions must ensure our existing infrastructure is modernized and balanced with the logical expansion of infrastructure in advance of growth.

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

Olathe is Johnson County's only full-service city. This offers tremendous opportunity to positively impact our quality of life by providing locally controlled, high quality services. Olathe city staff does an exceptional job across all categories of services. We must receive the maximum value for every tax dollar paid and fee collected. Residents rate satisfaction the highest in the KC region. High marks are a point of pride, but we must avoid becoming complacent. We must continue to look beyond our current levels of success and recognize that the nature of our high-performance city government means we strive for continuous improvement.

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

Olathe's FY22 proposed budget is in excess of \$450 Million. The City is a big business, and the budget is complex. The budget is balanced and aligned to spending priorities. The prioritization and budgeting process must be transparent at all times. This is especially important for Capital Improvement Projects prioritization. Budgeting workshops should be well-advertised and open to the public. The City should adjust its debt policy on the margin to allow additional infrastructure projects during this period of extraordinarily low financing costs. Lastly, Olathe should shift from a two-year budget cycle to a rolling two-year cycle.

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**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)**

Good economic development ensures the continued prosperity of our community and the sustainability of Olathe for future generations. The City must play an active role in economic development. Olathe uses the Chamber of Commerce as its economic development arm. The Chamber works with local businesses to facilitate their growth. The Chamber coordinates with various regional and State economic development organizations. The Chamber also routinely speaks with businesses around the Country encouraging their investment in establishing locations in Olathe. Olathe's proactive economic development initiatives translate to the creation of new jobs, population growth, new home sales, and a collective vibrant economy.

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**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 must embrace growth, proactively encouraging and steering it. The continued growth of Olathe offers the formula for the expanded prosperity of all Olatheans. The City must work collaboratively with the business community. Land developers, construction companies, and home builders are all part of the team effort that will create an ever-brighter future for Olathe. The City must update and follow its Comprehensive Development Plan. Development and redevelopment must be based on sound business cases. Selective incentives may be appropriate with verified ROIs explained to the public. All growth must be managed to enhance the existing fabric of Olathe.

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

Olathe should play a leadership role in the KC metro. Olatheans are bright and articulate. We have great common sense opinions on metro-wide issues, and those issues do impact us here in Olathe. We need to think beyond our city limits and consider our place in both the KC metro and Johnson County. Olathe sets the standard for good government and high-quality city services. The metro has much to learn from us, and we should always seek to be a collaborative participant in constructive conversations. City Councilmembers should be routinely involved in metro organizations like the Mid-America Regional Council.

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**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 key takeaways are to maintain adequate financial reserves, leverage every available dollar of Federal assistance, follow public health guidance, work with the local business community to help them leverage every available dollar of Federal assistance, and work collaboratively with all available social service organizations in acknowledgement that many Olatheans are experiencing financial distress. Our local government has performed exceptionally well over the past 15 months in the

face of significant uncertainty. All critical city services and public safety operations have continued to function well. This is testimony to the competence, leadership, and public service commitment of our City staff.

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**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)**

Managing growth and embracing the full intent of the Olathe 2040 Strategic Plan are the two biggest challenges. Olathe remains on a steep upward growth trajectory. As it has for the past 20+ years, we expect Olathe to continue to grow with the addition of 2,000 new residents every year. People are moving to Olathe because we have a great community, great school district, great jobs, and a great business climate. We must maintain all that is good in Olathe while scaling it up as the City expands. Our commitment to "live the Strategic Plan" ensures success.

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

Being in service to others is at the core of who I am. It's how I was raised, what I've spent my life doing, and why I want to be your City Councilor At-Large. I want to put the skills, knowledge, and principles I've honed from the military, corporate business, higher education, and service on various boards and commissions to work for you on Olathe's City Council. I want to represent all of Olathe and all Olatheans fairly and honestly. I want to ensure we make sound, well-informed decisions so that Olathe remains evermore successful now and for future generations.

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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)**

As someone who has dedicated my life to serving others and has accumulated a breadth of skills and experience relevant to or in public service, I bring immediate value to the City Council and all Olathens to help keep our City strong and positioned for success. My 30-year military career includes senior leadership and management positions in large-scale logistics and financial operations. I have an added 15 years in the corporate business world, and in higher education management. My MBA and MPA are a powerful combination. I have extensive economic development expertise based on five years chairing Olathe's Planning Commission.