

Montana 55+ Action Fund 2019 questionnaire

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members of Montana 55+ Action Fund, thank you for taking the time to fill out the 2019 Municipal Election Questionnaire.

This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what Montanans 55 and older consider the most important issues of the day. Questionnaire responses, prior voting records, and candidate viability will all be taken into consideration for endorsement by Montana 55+ Action Fund.

Responses should be considered public. Although we may choose not to publicize responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, Montana 55+ Action Fund, may note as much in its public materials.

We ask that you respond by August 16th by 6:00PM.

Good luck on your campaign!

* Required



Are you seeking Montana 55+ Action Fund's Endorsement and how would you use it?

Yes

No

Your answer



Please give us some details about your race. Candidate name, campaign staff, fundraising, digital/media, direct mail and anticipated budget. *

Danny Choriki

Ward 3, Billings City Council

I am approaching \$3K in funds raised and all the first wave of materials is in hand (yard signs, stickers, who is Danny flyers and first set of walk cards.)

I have about \$500 set aside for digital ads driving to facebook and website. I am currently redoing the website. Wanted it back up today. But soon. Will then starting using twitter and fb aggressively. I am currently think \$300 on FB for ads in the next 30 days and \$200 on google.

I hope to raise enough for two mailers to all registered voters and 1 in the last week to likely voters that haven't voted.

I hope to raise between 7 and 8 thousand.

Currently working without a staff, but plan to have a volunteer organizing meeting next week.

Top Three Issues *

Create incentives to develop in the exist



Why are you running for City Council? *

We have been living at a local level for over a generation now without examining the basic values and goals that existing public policy supports. In my opinion, which is based on a wealth of data about the growth and development of urban areas in North America and Europe, we need to drastically change directions.

While I understand the cultural reasons why Montanans do not want to spend money on anything, that is a real problem for the future. We need to invest in infrastructure, public safety, public health, education, parks and recreation, and city planning. We need to build the future. So my top issue is to help make how we fund the city government more transparent so that people are more aware of where their taxes and fees are spent. We need to be investing in our future and the need is even greater now since we have not been doing it for the past generation.

Continuing to sprawl onto green fields is bad for commute times, increases our carbon footprint, increases the need for more roads, makes it harder to support alternative transportation and public mass transit systems, decreases walkability, leads to a less healthy lifestyle, increases the costs of public services, and probably most important and hardest to see interferes with the natural human need to interact with other humans and build both community in a very real sense and a sense of community and belonging which is essential to healthy living. We need to enact public policy measure that reverses the trend towards sprawl and back to real infill.



Do you support a public safety mill levy? Explain your answer. *

Yes, it needs to be raised to the point where it actually covers all of the city's public safety costs which is around \$60 million annually and foreseeable capital projects. Right now one capital project is the evidence storage facility. I think that the public safety fund should be contributing to the city hall project and a fire station and police substation in The Heights.

We have been covering up the increased costs of public safety for over a generation now. It is shameful that the current council took cuts from public safety in order to maintain a tax cut. This process needs to become more transparent, more flexible, and new revenue streams need to be examined and enacted.

Downtown property tax revenue per square foot is significantly higher than any other section of the city. How will you encourage downtown investment and economic development? *

The legislation proposed during the last session was certainly a good idea and deserved more attention that it received. It in essence guaranteed private money that if they invest, then the city and state would not let the public infrastructure fall about around their investment. That is a very good starting place.

We need more education for local developers and financiers about how existing spaces are being reinvested in around North America. There is money to be made by investing in existing parts of the city.

The recode process will help. But we also need to look at the costs of greenfield development and insure that these new developments are repaying their subsidies and providing a positive revenue flow to the general fund. If not increased or additional fees for green field development needs to be examined. For example, the costs of the public space contribution should include more than just the land.

We also need to ensure that our planning and development process is capable of supporting the reinvestment in existing structures. This is often harder than with new development projects.



What is your understanding on the Commission on Energy and Conservation Advisory Board; what goals would you like to see the Commission set; and, if elected, what do you want to learn from the Commission? *

This is actually a very complicated problem and I wondered as this was moving forward if the proponents were putting their energies in the right direction. In my experiences watching Council meetings, i have seen over and over where staff is trying to inform the Council towards making decisions that would have a positive effect on the City's carbon footprint. The problem was consistently been a Council that doesn't support such policies, are predominantly climate change deniers and are even less likely to fund them unless there is a direct and immediate budget savings to be realized.

It isn't the staff that needs to be informed. In fact, the staff needs help informing and swaying the Council. I am worried that this Board will be too technology oriented and not process oriented. If that happens, an already overworked and underfunded city staff will likely become even more jaded by the process.

The Board needs to see the staff as their ally and work to help to find not just the ideas, but the money and political will to make these ideas real. Anything good that comes of this process will be because it enables someone with a passion for a project to turn a dream into reality.



The City of Billings is estimated to see 30,000 people retire in the next decade and many will have trouble finding affordable housing. What role do you see City Council in helping these people transition into affordable housing and what policies will you pursue? *

Ugh. There is already a huge gap between housing needs and affordability. These retirees along with immigrating retirees are going to put a real strain on housing. I honestly do not know what the real answer is at this point. I spent a day this week with the Housing Authority of Billings at their strategic planning workshop. It is obvious that we need to work both sides of the problem, i.e. growing the economic pie thereby increasing people ability to afford housing and finding ways to develop housing that is more affordable.

I do know that a part of the answer is in making green field development less financially attractive. I also think that we need to change the relationship between tenants and landlords. I also believe that banks make way too much money off of mortgages. But I do not have specific data on hand to devise policy for the former, nor can the city affect the latter. I do think we need to find ways to invest significant dollars into public affordable housing.



According to the State of Montana, Billings is 33 gaming licenses over the state mandated quote for licenses in the community and a new law precludes further licenses with gaming from being brought into Billings. There are approximately 55 gaming machines per 1,000 people in Billings. The city of Billings pays approximately \$12.5 million annually to the state in Video Gambling Machine taxes (VBM) and only receives \$265,000 of that back from the state. Explain your view on casinos in the city of Billings and how you will pursue zoning related to casino locations within the city limits. *

I do not have a specific policy recommendation for this. I do not really think this is primarily a zoning issue. I would like to closely examine the finances of this industry. I think the number of licenses in Billings is an indication that too much money is being made from gambling and fixing that problem is a larger issue.

One thought I have had in the back of my head is to find a way to force the state to provide better financial data. It would also be interesting to see how this is affecting domestic violence and other crimes here in the Valley. I also wonder why private profit is allowed in this industry. It seems to me that whatever happens with the machines and with sports betting, the process and revenue should go to the state and to the local governments.

BTW, the funding split between the state and local governments is skewed to the state and is skewed to rural governments. This is another example of urban dollars paying for everybody else.



What do you believe the number one healthcare concern is for the city of Billings and what steps need to be taken to address the concern you have identified? Explain. *

Sedentary Lifestyle.

A lot of what I have talked about would encourage walkability in the city. This should be a major goal of every thing we do relative to planning the structure and infrastructure of the city.

We need to put a significant amount of public financial resources into the parks and public recreation facilities of the city and county. Everyone should be within a five minute walk of some public space where they can walk, hike, run, or ride a bike or skate. We need spaces and places for water and winter sports. Public space for community activities should also be a part of the fabric of city living.

Community is a part of this as well. Communal spaces for face to face recreation and socializing were a part of everyday life we have lost to car and screen culture. These trends can be reversed if we consciously make the effort.



Please share anything else you want us to know. *

I was born in Bozeman and educated in towns and cities across Montana starting in Moccasin and graduating from Great Falls HS. I left in 1984 to pursue an education and a career in New York City as an environmental social scientist. That was also the year my parents moved from Great Falls to Billings. In 2012 I came back for my dad's 80th birthday and realized if I wanted to spend time with my parents, I needed to come back to Montana as soon as possible. I spent the last six years as primary care giver for Ray and Doris Choriki and I hope I gave them some joy and comfort in their final years. The among the gifts I received from them was a sense of responsibility for the community where I live, the understanding that outcomes matter more than intentions or beliefs, and that you always try to leave a place better than you found it.

During the decades I lived in NYC, I was a student, a policy analysis, an information technology expert, and a consultant on how information and decisions flow within organizations (process engineering). Because of these experiences I view the world and the human experience as a set of systems. I am trained in analyzing complex problems in search of root causes. And like any good shade tree mechanic after analysis, I kept testing possible solutions, and don't stop until the problem is fixed.

We live in a time when we are just starting to understand the complexity of life and how to use that understanding to make the lives of as many people as possible better than they were. In many ways, this has been my life work. Our grandparents understood that we need to be guided by what works and not blinded by ideology. I try to live by that standard. When we see a problem, we try to analyze the cause of the problem and try to fix it. If the first thing you do doesn't work, analyze it, come up with a new plan and try that. Ideology is easy but it is outcomes that matter.

Be the solution. #BeTheLight.

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