

Name: Hollies Winston
Seeking Office:
Brooklyn Park Mayor

Interview #8
RPAC Endorsed

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How long have you lived in your community?

12 years

Are you a Homeowner or Renter?

Renter

Do you own other real property (e.g. Business, Cabin, Investment, or Rental Property)? If so, which?

No

Describe your civic and/or community engagement.

I currently sit on the Governor's MN Council of African Heritage. I served two terms on the Brooklyn Park Budget Advisory Commission, and I've led and volunteered at countless community events; ranging from Coats for Kids to hosting a Toys for Tots event that provided \$8,000 in coats, toys and food to Huntington Place Apartment residents. I've volunteered for numerous local politicians, Speaker Hortman and Senator Hoffman to name a few, and Through the African American Caucus I created and led a youth/mentor program that raised money to provide youth with a stipend to canvass on behalf of candidates running for office. That program successfully placed kids in leadership positions on other campaigns, but more importantly led several alumni to work at the Capitol, with alumni being represented in all 3 branches of MN state government. Most recently, I helped found The Village, an advocacy organization based in Huntington Place Apartments, which advocates for improved living conditions and improved security at Brooklyn Park Apartment complexes. I've stepped away from leadership, do to running for office, but they are seeing some success in terms of holding management accountable, but also forging a closer relationship with police to reduce crime at the facility.

What is your fundraising goal? How much have you raised to date?

\$55,000 is our goal. We've raised \$28,000 thus far,

Are you accepting PAC contributions?

Yes

Please list any notable supporters or groups of supporters for your campaign

We have been endorsed by: Speaker Melissa Hortman, Sen. John Hoffman, Rep. Esther Agbaje, Rep Samantha Vang, Rep. Mike Nelson, BP East District City Councilor XP Lee, Brooklyn Park DFL, IUPAT, IBEW Local 292, AFSCME, Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation & LiUna.

What are the most important housing challenges facing your community?

Property taxes rising in Brooklyn Park affect not only the desire of people to move to Brooklyn Park but also the pocketbooks of homeowners and renters (rental property owners eventually pass the costs along to renters). I don't see homeowner's property taxes slowing until we begin to diversify Brooklyn Park's tax base. Currently we rely heavily on property owners because we have too few businesses in proportion to the number of homes in Brooklyn Park. Access to safe, affordable housing is a major issue, as evidenced by the recent stories at Huntington Place. However, this is not the only housing complex in our city with widespread reports of abhorrent living conditions. As Mayor I will work to ensure that bad actors are held accountable, and that everyone in Brooklyn Park has access to safe, affordable housing. And, like the rest of the metro, we are facing a housing shortage that needs to be addressed. Please see question 14 regarding my thoughts on solving this issue.

The Twin Cities Metro is facing a housing shortage unlike any we have experienced in recent history. What will you do to increase the number of homes available to residents of your community?

As stated, housing is a Twin Cities metro issue, so needs to be addressed at that level and with the assistance of the state, to come up with a comprehensive policy that doesn't put too much of the burden on Brooklyn Park. I would also look to subject matter experts, like the Minneapolis Area Realtors, to advise regarding housing policy. I would pursue two policies to address this issue: 1) Work to develop more market rate mid to high end apartments in Brooklyn Park. I would look to couch some affordable housing within those apartments. This will not only alleviate the need for more housing, but will also: a) Create some of the population density needed to support the type of restaurants, entertainment and development residents are requesting, but would also, b) Contribute towards increased city tax revenue. 2) I'd ensure we continue to zone for the production of more single family and senior homes.

Minnesota has one of the largest homeownership gaps between Whites and Blacks, Indigenous, and People of Color. This is one of MAR's primary concerns. What would you propose at the local level to close this home ownership gap?

As we all know, Minnesota measures as one of the worst states for BIPOC home ownership. For most families, homes are the greatest source of wealth they will

own. There is a long and sordid history that has led to BIPOC communities' lower homeownership rates. This is a multifaceted problem that I hope to help with. Brooklyn Park currently has a requirement for new multi unit buildings built in our city to offer a certain minimum of affordable housing. We should expand on that, but also continue to build more homes and affordable housing in Brooklyn Park. As we expand housing we also need to ensure that Brooklyn Park is attracting the types of businesses that appeal to current Brooklyn Park residents and that will appeal to future residents. We should also more aggressively educate residents that don't own a home as to how they can get one. Whether it's educating them regarding MHFA programs, using down payment assistance programs or connecting with non-profit or even private organizations willing to partner with the city and help residents clean up their credit, Brooklyn Park needs to see education as a priority. That also means finding creative ways to meet people where they are at, whether in town homes, apartments or rental homes. To bolster this approach we'd focus on building relationships between reputable lenders and people of color. Integral to that approach is also undertaking outreach initiatives to connect lenders with homeowners in BIPOC communities. Partnering with organizations like MARS to find more effective approaches to this aspect of expanding affordable housing is also key. Lastly, We will also review our residential zoning laws to make sure we are helping to facilitate new housing developments in Brooklyn Park that will help solve this issue.

How do you think the city can best balance the rights of tenants and property owners to effectively manage rental housing?

Brooklyn Park needs affordable housing, so we can't remove it. However, we do need to make sure it's safe and that we provide services to those in rental units that allow them to eventually move to buy houses. That looks like more youth programming to keep youth busy and crime down, city staff reaching out to apartment complexes to inform them about homeownership programs and working with apartment complexes and residents to help them self organize to help prevent crime. There are a number of local non-profits that can also assist with notifying residents of homeownership programs, and who can actively work with apartment residents to make that transition. There are also some low cost ways to address much of the litter that often accompanies apartment complexes. 1: We should lean on ownership more to clean up their immediate areas and 2: we can coordinate days of clean up within the community to address the litter. That program can consist of both volunteers and youths in programs sponsored by the city and local businesses.

What are your views on property tax rates in your community? Do you have concerns related to the city's property tax rate? If so, how would you address those concerns once elected?

The city needs to do its part in slowing the growth of property tax. With public safety taking up 65+ percent of our city's budget and our population continuing to grow we are facing a public safety bill that will crowd out all but the most essential functions in our city. Cutting public safety is not an option I'll consider. However, because our city has so few businesses to help foot the tax burden, property taxes will continue to grow until we face the very real reality that we need to bring in more businesses to share that burden. I would address these concerns by building a coalition with city councilors, and hopefully other organizations like yours to find ways to plan out developing the remaining open land in Brooklyn Park to address this issue. I have no issue with more homes being built, but in order for those homeowners to want to stay in Brooklyn Park or for homeowners to want to continue to move here we'll need to bring businesses that will meet their interests and that will help us to diversify Brooklyn Park's tax revenue.

Please provide links to all social media accounts connected to you or your campaign if any.

<https://www.facebook.com/HolliesBP> <https://twitter.com/HolliesBP>

The Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS(R) may plan to interview some candidates virtually, would you be willing to participate, if contacted?

Yes