

## **Kristiana Johnson – Council Position #1**

**1. Do you favor a regional or a local approach to addressing issues such as housing and homelessness? If your answer is “a regional approach”, do you hold fast to that answer even where regional solutions such as a push for a massive increase in urbanized density, incentives and tax breaks to developers shift the tax burden to residents, including seniors and those on fixed incomes? How would you intend to listen to citizens and protect the character and fragile environment of our city from competing regional interests?**

**If you favor a local approach, how will you “protect the character and fragile environment of our city” and counter the shifting of tax burden from developers to Edmonds citizens while ensuring a policy that reasonably increases housing availability?**

The Citizens’ Housing Commission was tasked with developing recommendations for a variety of housing options but did not tackle homelessness. I favor a local approach to housing. We should proceed with caution as we consider the fifteen Housing Commission recommendations. I think that we should move slowly to protect the character and fragile environment of our city.

Edmonds is on pace to meet the growth management housing targets for 2035. We do not need to make radical changes to our zoning to continue to meet our targets.

Homelessness can be handled on several different levels. A school district approach is most helpful for students experiencing homelessness. They may have specific needs best helped by the school district such as in school health clinics, hygiene stations, and a place to wash their clothes, breakfast and school lunch programs, and weekend and summer food programs.

Other homelessness programs may be best handled by Verdant, the Hospital District, working with the Snohomish County Health District and the criminal justice system to deal with alcohol or drug addiction and mental health treatment options.

The local government is probably better suited to deal with housing and food insecurity issues. We have learned that it is more cost effective to keep a family housed than it is to provide for new housing opportunities after they become homeless.

Last year, the City hired a part-time human services manager and is looking to hire a social worker / agency to provide direct services to our residents. Last year's CARES fund provided grants to qualifying households and this year's American Rescue Act funds also target local residents needing food and shelter assistance. Additional grant opportunities are now available for home repairs and utility assistance.

**2. Edmonds' government seems to have devolved into an unelected staff and City Attorney more frequently proposing and even advocating for legislation. Few even reside in the City by which they are employed. Should unelected staff have a heightened level of influence and power in creating legislation? How should that be managed and where should Edmonds' citizens fit into that legislative process?**

Yes, most Directors, under the Mayor's guidance, seem to be taking more and more lead positions in proposing and advocating for legislation. This often seems to cross over into the Legislative process of the City Council. It seems inevitable because the Mayor often can count on four votes to support his programs and wishes. As long as the Council prefers to support the Mayor, with his four vote majority, there is very little that can be done until the next election.

The voters have witnessed this and can oppose this disturbing trend on a regular basis during public comments and emails and other correspondence. ACE is an excellent example of a civic group remaining engaged in the Legislative process.

The public should remain engaged. Their voices must be heard to provide timely guidance. Edmonds' citizens are always welcome to provide comments and participate in the City Council's legislative process. We are a representative democracy and the citizens are at the top of the legislative process.

**3. RCW 36.70A.140 requires a city with a Comprehensive Plan to ensure “continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations...” In contravention of this law Edmonds government has been lacking in how citizens are engaged in its “consideration and response to public comments”. (RCW 36.70.140) Examples include Citizen Housing Commission polls written with predetermined outcomes, poll outcomes being discounted when the results did not conform to a certain agenda and a refusal to read aloud public comments submitted in writing to Council meetings against the spirit and intent of the Governor’s Proclamation 20-28 which states that any virtual public meeting “(b) provides the ability for all persons attending the meeting to hear each other at the same time.” What will you do as a Council member to ensure continuous public participation in a genuine and transparent manner?**

The Council has decided to include written correspondence to the Council as attachments to the written record, as recommended by the City Clerk and City Attorney. The Council majority voted to limit comments to an equivalent of three minutes and only read by the writer of the comments.

I can encourage continuous public participation in a genuine and transparent manner. What I have done is summarize the salient points of several writers, such as in support of the Civic Field project. I have also written back to the authors of emails and encouraged them to read their email during public comments.

**4. Rank the following issues in order of your priority for Edmonds. Detail your ideas about how to address each of the top three. Please be specific.**

1. Public Safety

The protection of the public health safety and welfare is one of the main functions of local government and is therefore my highest priority. I would count the Police Department SNO911 and South County Fire in the public safety category.

The City Council has had no regular briefings from the Mayor or the Human Resources Director about the search for a new Police Chief. The bottom line is that City's administration has spent \$120, 00 in two nationwide searches during the past nineteen months

## 2. Protection of the Environment

The Edmonds Comprehensive Plan provides for regular updates including the Utilities Element, Sustainability Element, Urban Forestry Management Plan, Climate Protection Element, Land Use Element, Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan all with supporting goals, policies, programs and projects. There are other supporting rules and regulations, including the zoning map, Edmonds Community Development Code, Shoreline Management Program, Critical Areas ordinance, SEPA checklist, and FEMA Flood Hazard maps that provide for the environmental protection of public and private development.

## 3. Economic Development

During the downturn of the economy around 2008, the City of Edmonds formed an Economic Development Commission to aid the local economy. Important early steps were to collaborate with the University Of Washington's Green Futures lab to create form based zoning for the Westgate area. (Five Corners was also studied but never translated into form based code.)

A Strategic Plan was also an early product. Major milestones of this effort were the Edmonds Waterfront Center and Civic Field, and the downtown restrooms. I think that an update of the Strategic plan should be the next focus of the Economic Development Commission.

The City promotes Edmonds as a tourist destination with its many artistic venues, festivals, transportation hubs, hotels and waterfront. The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee distributes funds to organizations seeking tourism support.

The State inaugurated a Creative District designation, with Edmonds being the first in the state. A capital element is key to each plan. For Edmonds that element is the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Cultural Corridor that connects the Edmonds Center for the Arts with Main Street's bars and restaurants, galleries and shops. As part of

the City's 2017 application, it was estimated that the arts and culture sector, consisting of 103 arts and culture related entities, organizations and businesses generated an estimated 19.6 million in revenue to the local economy with 440 full time jobs and 17 million in labor income.

4. Affordable Housing

5. Equity and Inclusion