

**Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods City Commission 2017 General Election Candidate Questionnaire**  
**Bassem Chanine**

Name, E-mail address, best phone number to contact you

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1. Have you ever attended a LAN meeting? Why/Why not?

- I have attended a couple meeting around July and August 2016 at the library, I was invited to come attend when I was running for county commission

2. What is your opinion of LAN?

- I strongly support the idea of having an association of neighborhoods. The neighborhood is the foundation of a community. When the neighborhood foundation is healthy and communicating then the community is healthy and communicating.

3. Does your neighborhood have a neighborhood organization? If yes, are you a member?

- NA

4. What community organizations are/have you been involved in?

- Boys and girls club of Lawrence
- Meals on wheels
- Islamic Center of Lawrence

5. What city or county boards/commissions have you served on? If none, why do you think you're qualified to be a city commissioner?

- My qualifications are based out of my decade of experience in business management. If elected I will conduct the business of the city with the same level of respect, dedication, and compassion that I use when running my own business. I feel that the fact that I would be new to the city government would be a move in the right direction from the same old, same old mentality that has slowed past commissions

6. Would you support gathering the zip codes of employees from businesses that receive tax abatements, in order to determine if we're providing jobs for workers in Lawrence/Douglas County? If so, would you work to implement this policy, if elected? If not, why not?

- I do support this policy and would pursue it quickly upon being elected. We should not be giving tax breaks in exchange for employing people that are not from are community. Especially, when so

many members of our community are under or flat out unemployed. Lawrence is lagging behind when it comes to jobs and it is my goal to reverse that drag and raise employment for all members of the city.

7. Would you support gathering information from Peaselee Tech regarding job placement of graduates in order to determine that they are filling jobs in Lawrence/Douglas County? If so, would you work to implement this, if elected? If not, why not?
  - My response to this question is the same as the prior question. If we want to continue to grow in a sustainable fashion we have to collect the appropriate data in order to properly plan that growth. So, yes I support it and yes I will pursue it upon being elected.
8. What qualities and skills would you look for in a planning commissioner?
  - Prior experience is a must, but even more important than that is hiring someone that cares about people. This is similar to how I hire people to work at my business. I am of course interested in their prior experience, education, and their plans for the future, but I am more interested in their character and values. When hiring a planning commissioner we need to look for someone who doesn't just view the city as asphalt, buildings, and infrastructure. The planning commissioner must be a person who is capable of seeing the diverse group of people they will be planning for.
9. What qualities and skills would you look for in a BZA commissioner?
  - My answer is the same as the above, but for a BZA commissioner I think it is also important that they have a deep understanding of the city itself. Zoning is one of those issues that people often ignore...right up until something goes wrong.
10. Does Lawrence need a convention center downtown? If yes, what public incentives (if any) would you support to build it? If you don't support it, why not?
  - No, building a convention center downtown is an example of putting the cart before the horse. While at some point a convention center may prove necessary, first we will need to grow the city's economy to the point where there is a demand. Otherwise it is just another building project that will enrich a few at the expense of everyone else's tax dollars.
11. Do you support the use of public incentives to facilitate development of a grocery store in the Borders building? Why/ Why not?
  - I support it 100%. While the details for such a project must be in the best interest of the city, the truth is that on the side of town where the Borders building is located we are looking at a food desert. The building has been abandoned for far too long and I think putting a grocery store in that location is the exact right move for this side of town.
12. If a development that receives public incentives includes affordable housing, how long should the housing remain available as "affordable"?

- Until the house has been initially purchased. Creating artificial time restraints sounds like a recipe for corruption.
13. How would you like to see Neighborhood Revitalization Act incentives used in the future?
- While there are many potential uses for these incentives, ideally I would like to see those funds used to stabilize the more mature neighborhoods in the community.
14. Review the 2018-2022 Capital Improvement Plan. Identify 3 items that you think Lawrence can live without over the next five years and why.
- There are multiple items in the plan that reflect heavy amounts of spending on the Lawrence Municipal Airport. Given the large amount of expense that the airport is costing the community, the very few members of the community that actually use the airport, and the fact that are city is only forty-five minutes away from a major airport, it may be time to reconsider the cost/benefit for shareholders in our community.
15. What is your opinion regarding development in the floodplain?
- I feel that the current floodplain permit guidelines are adequate.
16. Does the city need to connect 19th Street to Venture Park? Why/Why not?
- While at this point in time I don't have any objections to such a connection, it is not high on my list of priorities at this time.
17. Does the city need to create specific regulations regarding AirBnB accommodations? If so, what would you recommend? If not, why not?
- Yes, AirBnB should be taxed in accordance with the transient guest tax program the same as any other hotel/motel operation. In addition to this I feel that the regulation being pursued by Kansas City is a good model for further regulation on short term property rentals.
18. Would you support the state's proposal for a whitewater rafting park at Clinton Lake, which would be funded by STAR bonds? Why/Why not?
- No! I could speak at length on this, but whoever proposed this project must be ignorant of what Clinton Lake means to not just the residents of Lawrence, but to those in surrounding communities as well. It is an unnecessary intrusion.
19. Have you reviewed the draft Horizon 2020 update? If yes, what is your overall opinion of it? If no, why not?

- I have reviewed it and feel that it is a good plan, but it could have used more community involvement in its development

20. Do you support getting rid of the synthetic ice rink at the library? Why/Why not?

- Yes, it is an expense that the community doesn't need at this point in time.

21. Do you support the fireworks ban? If so, what, specifically, would you recommend to provide more effective enforcement? If not, why not?

- I love fireworks, but the ban is itself ineffective. I believe the focus for law enforcement should be pursuing the *drunken* use of fireworks, which is where much of the danger is occurring.

22. Should the City take over the maintenance of sidewalks from individual property owners, thus sharing the cost city-wide? If yes, how would you suggest it be funded? If no, why not?

- No, simply because the city does not have the money at this point in time. What I do support is the city negotiating with contractors for the best price for value and providing payment plans to individuals who need to have their sidewalks repaired.

23. One of the city's critical success factors in the Strategic Plan includes the following:

*Commitment to Core Services: Core municipal services reflect legal mandates and the City's commitment to meet health, safety and welfare needs and maintain assets while adapting service levels to meet evolving community expectations.*

Please identify what you consider to be core services and how they should be funded.

- In the city of Lawrence you are entitled to being safe and healthy. While there is not room here to enumerate the many different types of core services I will use this space to focus on something that may be distinctive. I believe that residents of Lawrence, KS are entitled to be free from discrimination regardless of personal lifestyle choices or their heritage.

24. Do you think the city commission should add the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting per month back on its schedule? Why/Why not?

- I don't see the need at this point in time, however if the community desired adding an extra meeting to the schedule I have no opposition.

25. Do you support or oppose each of the three sales tax initiatives? Why/Why not?.

Q1: Public Transit

- Yes, I am willing to pay more to make sure people who are blind and disabled get from point A to Point B in a safe, simple, and short fashion

Q2: Infrastructure

- Yes, good healthy infrastructure is a must for economic development and growth and increasing the tax base. infrastructure is key to creating good jobs and promoting full economic recovery

### Q3: Affordable Housing

- Yes Affordable housing Development Benefits Families and Local Economies, This includes positions within construction, architecture, engineering, as well as local businesses like restaurants and retail.

I support all of the tax initiatives listed above...because they are essential to having a city. As a business owner I understand the strain of taxes as well as anyone, but if Lawrence wants to be a city then we must be willing to pay for those services that are required to be a city.

26. Tell us something you hear out on the campaign trail that we haven't asked and how you address it.

- Just recently I have been asked about when the community became unsafe. This was in reaction to a string of trials, shootings, and homicides. My response was that much of the violence is related to domestic violence, and so raising awareness and support for that issue is essential. Much of the other violence involved individuals from outside of our community entering it in relation to both the drug and sex trafficking trade. This is best resolved by better community policing and paying attention to when things are out of place and having positive relationships between residents and police.

27. Is there a particular issue you're passionate about that hasn't been covered that you'd like to tell us about?

- Human trafficking. It is a booming business in the United States and sadly, Lawrence has played a role in this. I think the first step is regulating massage parlors, but it is also necessary that we change the way we view human trafficking. For far too long law enforcement has punished the victims while ignoring the pimps and perpetrators, this has to stop if we have any hope of ending modern day slavery.

28. Tell us a secret about yourself.

- I could have been a semi pro Badminton player