

Aspire North 2022 Candidate Questionnaire

Full name: Lauren Flynn

Office running for: Grand Traverse County Board of Commission- District 2

Current position/occupation:

Director of Operations- Grand Traverse County Democratic Party

List previous campaigns, elected office(s), boards, commissions, etc.:

Finance Director for Matt Morgan's Congressional Campaign 2018, Fund Development Chair, Generations Ahead

Why are you running for office?

Since I was a young person, I have been instilled with the importance of serving and giving back to your community. I moved to GT County 18 years ago as a young mom. I quickly found that with only an hourly job, I needed to work a separate shift from my spouse because daycare was out of the budget, rent needed to be paid and food needed to be on the table. Economic and emotional stress caused me to become a single mother. I relied on services provided by community entities like the Grand Traverse County Health Department, and with those, I was able to ensure that medical, dental, and other needs were met and my girls grew up healthy. Without the supportive services from Grand Traverse County, things could have ended up a little differently. And, yet, I know that current conditions - expensive rent and a daycare crisis - are increasingly putting our young families now in a position of constant struggle and hardship. We can do better, and that is why I am running to serve this community and District 2. We can invest in the citizens who literally run this community. We can work together, everyone, all hands on deck, to create a plan to grow year long work force housing to ensure anyone who works in GT County can afford to live here as well. I have worked many jobs in our community from restaurant, to retail, to real estate, sometimes working multiple positions at one time. As my children grew older, I went back to school, did my homework at the kitchen table with them, and have since earned my Bachelor's and Master's. I am proud of what I've accomplished as a single

mother and professional woman. My community helped me to do it. And now it's time for me to serve my community to ensure that more people have the same chance.

Briefly describe your campaign strategy :

My campaign strategy is building relationships with voters through direct voter contact.

Why do you think you will win?

I think I will win because I am the best candidate for the position. I do not take this campaign lightly. I am working hard every day to share my story, my goals, and how I feel I can help the residents of Grand Traverse County District 2.

How many votes do you need to win?

One more than my opponent!

Are REALTORS actively helping with your campaign?

Yes. I have had realtors personally endorse me, donate to my campaign, and hold fundraisers for me. As a former realtor, I turn to my former colleagues when I have questions about the market and housing.

What are your thoughts on the Grand Traverse County's municipal budget? Budget cuts, increases, or funding initiatives you support? Service you believe could be delivered more efficiently?

First of all, I do not take the budget lightly. I feel an important task of reviewing and passing the budget should take more than just a few moments. I am looking forward to finding ways through budgeting, working with nonprofits and other municipalities, and responsible ARPA funds spending to assist in growing housing availability, mental health services, daycare accessibility, and our infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband for example).



The shortage of housing inventory is a big topic among our Aspire North membership and the community at large across our area. Does local

government have a role to play in this realm? If so, what do you think a local government can reasonably do to address housing supply concerns?

Yes I do believe local governments have a role. As Housing is one of the top issues that I want to tackle as a county commissioner as I feel that once relieved, other issues we face like talent attraction and workforce shortage will be also begin to decrease, I will work to bring community leaders, nonprofits and other stakeholders to the table to hear ideas and thoughts to solve the problem. We can turn to look at what other communities have done to enhance year-long workforce housing. In my research, I have found that smaller communities like ours have created Joint Powers Authorities, in which two or more government entities join forces to issue tax-exempt debt and use proceeds from sales to offer low cost mortgages to affordable housing developers. This may not be the answer, but this like many other ideas can be discussed and brainstormed with stakeholders to solve the problem.

Land use continues to be a highly debated issue, including those elements centered around planning and zoning. Are there specific policies or zoning restrictions you support or oppose?

Not at this moment.

Should local governments use zoning to prohibit rental of a residential property on a short-term basis?

There are two sides to this coin, and I have discussed both in length. On one hand, like I stated before, I understand the importance tourism is to the strength of our local economy. Short Term Rentals offer more opportunity for visitors to stay here in the area and provide them a different and unique experience in GT County. Short Term Rentals also offer an income for many of our residents and help families use their property to subsidize their annual revenue. On the other side, there are members of our communities losing out of the opportunity to live close to their work and are being out bid in purchasing homes due to large corporations investing in these properties. As a servant to my district, I will turn to the voice of my constituents. The concerns of the members of my district must be balanced with the authority of the local government. Our county is unique in comparison to other counties within our state. What is good for one municipality, may not work in another. I think with conversation, planning, and listening, we as

a community can create a model for short term rentals that is balanced and works for the needs of our county.

Should the government be allowed to require a property owner to bring something up to code as a condition of property transfer?

I very much respect the property rights of an owner. As a former realtor, I feel that if something needs to be brought up to code or fixed prior to transfer of property then that should be negotiated between the seller and the buyer.

How and on what issues would you utilize Aspire North's input?

As a county commissioner, I will always turn to the leaders of Aspire North to share with me and other commissioners what their members are concerned about and wanting to discuss. My door will always be open to find solutions for the real estate industry and residents of GT County.