

Full name: Shea M. O'Brien

Office running for: Traverse City City Commission

Current position/occupation: The Children's House Support Staff

List previous campaigns, elected office(s), boards, commissions, etc.: Roughly four years ago I ran for Mayor of Traverse City. I currently serve on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and the Sara Hardy Farmers Market board. I previously served on the Active Transportation Committee. I am the Volunteer Coordinator for the Traverse Heights Community Garden and a Dennon Museum store volunteer.

Why are you running for office? I'm running for office as someone who has lived, worked and learned in Traverse City my entire life. My parents and grandparents worked hard in their youth to create a home for me and it's time for me to return the favor. I have a keen planning mind and always weigh any costs on us today versus the benefits to us tomorrow when making a decision. I'm pragmatic, logical, intentional and thoughtful, all qualities that make for a good leader.

Briefly describe your campaign strategy: I have been meeting with area leaders and community members. I have been listening to their concerns and learning what they see as solutions. I have participated in many of the studies and open houses put on by city staff, including the corridor study and zoning amendment open house. I plan to knock on doors and participate in the many forums and questionnaires.

Why do you think you will win? I'm practical and keep a positive attitude. I listen and process what people say before I respond, choosing my words intentionally. I've been ensconced in local politics for many years. I have historical knowledge while always looking toward our city's future.

How many votes do you need to win? As many as it takes to win. There are three commission seats open and nine people are running. That means I need one more vote than the person who comes in 4th at the very least.

Are REALTORS actively helping with your campaign? None that I know of but I'm always open to any help offered.

Traverse City goes through an annual budgeting process. What do you think budget priorities should be? Pensions and pay for our first responders and staff will always take priority. We're going to see the retirement of many staff in the coming years. We will need to budget for the replacement of those positions. Following that we should prioritize electrifying all city buildings and vehicles. Implementing a complete streets policy and prioritizing the lowest hanging fruits that have the biggest impact on our community. And finally the beautification of all our neighborhood parks. These are just a few of my priorities.

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? Local government absolutely plays a role in addressing the housing shortage. The proposed zoning amendments are a great place for local government to start. Though it will lead to very little infill for at least a decade, removing these barriers will allow future generations to begin taking action toward addressing this shortage. I would like to see staff exploring other creative ways to address this issue like land leases of city owned properties. Or having the city manager work with land owning organizations, like Munson or TCAPS, to use their vacant properties for housing or multi-purpose buildings.

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? I believe I covered this in the previous question. I would support going further with the zoning amendments, like allowing triplexes and quadplexes in the R-2 districts. Nothing that the city changes about land use requires property owners to do anything with their land but they are onerous blockades that when removed will allow more opportunities for addressing our housing issues.

Should local governments use zoning to prohibit the rental of a residential property on a short-term basis? I'm on the fence when it comes to this. I believe people should be allowed to do what they wish but when a property becomes a de facto hotel it removes long term housing from the already strained market. How is this good for our business community? Customers are closer to businesses, yes but if a business owner struggles to find employees because of our housing issues the customer may not have as good an experience as when there are more and better employees. I also think coming out of the covid-19 pandemic, people are seeking a certain level of service and are returning to hotels rather than short term rentals. Thus, I believe short term rentals are a passing fad.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) has been described as a regional taxation tool used by the Traverse City DDA to fund infrastructure repairs and improvements required by intense regional use of our downtown core. Do you support renewal of TIF? If not, who would/should ultimately pay for those required costs/repairs? I absolutely support the renewal of TIF. Our economic center is like a tree, the projects and roads are like the trunks and branches and TIF is like the water and soil that feed the tree. Without TIF the boardwalk along the Boardman-Ottaway river won't be completed in a timely fashion, which will become a crown jewel for all of us to enjoy. We have to understand that plans are flexible and when a water main breaks TIF dollars may need to step in to cover the unforeseen costs and thereby pushing other projects out.

How and on what issues would you utilize Aspire North's input? Obviously, housing developments. Aspire North's input would be vital when the city looks at the various surface lots as possible housing developments. Aspire North would obviously have home sales numbers

and prices, giving us better data and information to work from when discussing housing needs.
The more information we have the better the decisions we can make.