

2019 SPFE Public City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Lynn Connolly was invited to participate, but did not submit a completed questionnaire. A completed questionnaire is a requirement for further screening and consideration for endorsement.

Please limit the following questions to a yes or no response.

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) believes parents, educators, community members, and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, increasingly out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda have poured money into political races with the goal of removing local voices from discussions about our children's education.

- a. **Will you and your campaign reject contributions and independent expenditures from wealthy donors who live outside our community and from market-based education reform organizations?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Amy Brendmoen	X	

2. Despite recent increases, public education statewide is severely underfunded, and has not kept pace with inflation. Communities have increasingly been called on to make up the lack of funding by passing levies that increase property taxes for home owners, while wealthy corporations continue to receive tax cuts – allowing them to benefit from our communities without contributing to them.

- a. **Will you as endorse, support, and campaign on increasing revenue that will go directly to public education funding?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Amy Brendmoen	X	

3. SPFE members have indicated that they do not want to participate in Q-Comp (Quality Compensation). The core components of Q-Comp include: performance pay and salary schedule reform, teacher evaluation, and job-embedded professional development. Each Q-Comp plan must include all of the core components. The implementation of Q-Comp requires performance pay to be based on standardized test scores. This funding is dependent on action by the state legislature.

- a. **Would you support moving the funding and capacity put into Tim Pawlenty's failed teacher merit pay scheme commonly called q-comp, into equitable funding for all Minnesota districts general budget?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Amy Brendmoen	X	

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions and will you fight to protect them?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Amy Brendmoen	X	

Please limit your response to 150 words or fewer for each part of the questions below.

1. What is the value of public education for you and for the city of Saint Paul?

AMY BRENDMOEN: A robust public education system is critical for the city in so many ways. We need schools that can train a workforce for 21st century jobs, help our people climb out of poverty and find opportunities, and inculcate the skills needed to be active participants in our democracy. That system needs to be strong and it needs to be public

2. An endorsement from SPFE is only given to candidates that show they are a champion for public education. We do not endorse in all races.

- a. **What are your direct connections to SPPS, SPFE, and/or public education?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: All of my three children have attended Saint Paul public schools, and I have been an active parent in school events and other activities. As CM, I seek opportunities to engage with the teachers and admin at both Como HS and Wash in classroom and extracurricular as well.

- b. **What is your definition of a “public education champion”?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: A public education champion is someone who understands the unique needs and opportunities of the system and works to strengthen it in the context of public investment

- c. **Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: There is a strong base of teachers in Ward 5 that looks to the SPFE for guidance as they make decisions about who to support. It signals a strong partnership between the SPFE and me.

- d. **How do you envision working in partnership with SPFE? What does that look like when we disagree?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I want to partner with SPFE to leverage city resources and programs to improve outcomes for everyone. As City Council President, I work closely with the Mayor in crafting our city’s budget and determining priorities for investment. By working together, we can reduce duplication and focus our resources on the areas of greatest need.

3. Over the past year, educators across the country have gone on strike. Just one year ago, SPFE narrowly avoided a strike by reaching a last-minute contract with the district.

- a. **What have you learned from the Red for Ed Movement?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I was not familiar, but based on a google search, the nationwide success of the Red for Ed Movement demonstrates the power that we can have if we join together to demand the resources our children and communities deserve. We need

to be bold with our asks and emphasize the full range of our needs, rather than simply asking for small concessions.

- b. UTLA (United Teachers of Los Angeles) recently ended their strike. In addition to much-needed pay increases, the challenges facing their students are similar to the students of SPPS. How can you use your position to support educators, parents and students in addressing these concerns?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: The Los Angeles strike raised valid concerns about the way that charter schools have drained resources from public, union schools. We need to be deliberate about where and how more schools launch in the city, including taking a more active role in permitting and regulation. We also need to fight back against the model that means the success of a charter school means the detriment of our public schools in a limited pot of money by lifting state funding for our children.

4. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has a diverse student population, with over 75% of students identifying as People of Color. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent curricula and educators that reflect the diversity of our city. At the same time, data shows that our city and our schools are becoming more segregated.

- a. Segregation and poverty are harmful to all of us, especially our students and their families. How will you work to integrate our city and our schools?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: One critical way to fight segregation is to increase the range of affordable housing choices throughout the city, so that people have the opportunity to live in whatever attendance area they choose.

5. Research shows the importance of stimulation starting at birth. We know students are more successful in school when they have access to high-quality early childhood education. All students should have access to these programs, whether through our public school systems or accredited independent providers.

- a. How will you partner with SPFE to ensure all families have access to quality Pre-K and early learning programs in our city?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I will work with partners on the School Board and City Council to advocate for a sustainable, state-wide approach that puts our children first.

- b. New research shows that many Minnesotans live in childcare deserts, without adequate access to childcare options for their children. How will you use your role to provide additional options early learning options for parents?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: The City is exploring a 3K program in partnership with SPPS and county. I am supportive of extending care and early education opportunities as it's a long term investment in our children, families as well as our economy and public safety.

6. The current federal Secretary of Education is well-known for her support of “disrupting” public education through “school choice” in the form of online learning, charter schools, and vouchers.

a. **What is your understanding of how education reform policies impact public education?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: These policies starve our schools of resources and are often surreptitious ways to break union strength.

b. **What is your understanding of how charter schools differ from local public schools?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: Charter schools are usually non-union, which harms everyone in our community in the long term through instability and lower wages and benefits. They will also frequently create environments that intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate segregation.

c. **Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools and charter school expansions so that a comprehensive study can be done on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact)? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: Yes. The composition of these studies would have to be determined by the legislature, which would have the sole authority to impose such a moratorium. Nevertheless, I would advocate that officials from SPPS and SPFE be included at all stages.

7. SPPS and the City of Saint Paul presently do business with institutions that engage in practices that destabilize our community through predatory lending practices, investing in private prisons, and corporate tax avoidance. These practices have led to economic injustice and racial discrimination in our city.

a. **How will you use your role to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I do believe corporations should pay their fair share. I would like to hear more from you about your vision for this and how we can engage in the future..

b. **Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, destabilizing families. Will you join with SPFE in calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of school age students during the school year? What steps will you take to separate the city of Saint Paul from institutions that participate in predatory lending?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: Yes.

c. **Will you commit to working with SPFE to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools? What does this look like to you?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: Yes, I think we need to work to find sources of funding for our schools that don't rely on a perpetually increasing ladder of property tax raises. And we need to band together to ensure that the State funds the unmet needs with its long underfunded LGA obligations.

8. Traditionally the city of Saint Paul and SPPS have had an arms' length relationship. Each has their own budget, and sphere of influence. However, the actions a city takes impacts the daily lives of students and educators, and the desire to be near quality, local, public schools is often a primary factor in how families decide where to live.
 - a. **How will you seek out educator and student voice in your decision-making process? What steps will you take to invite SPFE in as a stakeholder? How will you share information with SPFE, parents and students?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I have questions and concerns about the structural "arms length" relationship between SPPS and the City. I would be very interested in a more connected, thoughtful method of decision-making that includes things from capital investments to (literally) when to call snow days. This type of work would be apropos as into term three --I have strong understanding of history, relationships and how budgets impact.

Related, I am currently working to engage young people, including students, in the political process by building a "Students for Amy" arm of my campaign. It is important to me that youth voices are actively sought out in decisions that affect them, and as a parent of SPPS students, I understand first-hand how crucial parent engagement is as well. I think it is essential to ensure maximum breadth of participation to make sure we include all perspectives and pool our power.

- b. **Where do you see opportunities for city and the school district to partner? How will you invite input from SPFE, parents and students on what those partnerships look like?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: I initiated a work group between SPPS and the City to discuss how we could better share facilities. A motivation was that I think the city should bring its recreation programming into the schools rather than continuing to build more of its own (more over hear, more capital outlay) and to figure out how to better share our fields, playground, buildings to better service kids and to preserve scare tax dollars. Our first report back will be in the coming months. This groups, as it is formalized would be a great space to partner with SPFE and students as well.

9. In 2018, SPFE joined our institutional partners in calling for elected officials to engage in co-governance and people-centered democracy. As a practice, this means engaging with your partners in all areas of public work, a willingness to be held accountable to promises, and on-going, open communication.
 - a. **What do the terms co-governance and people-centered democracy mean to you?**

AMY BRENDMOEN: These terms can be difficult to lock down. I want to commit to engaging people meaningfully in the process at every level. I will always reach out, but I

also want to hear from you the level of engagement that will be useful and valuable for you.

b. What groups and individuals will you look to for guidance?

AMY BRENDMOEN: That list will be constantly evolving--including labor orgs, LGBTQ orgs, young people, retired people. SPFE will surely be one, as it has been throughout my tenure.

c. What steps will you take to make sure decisions are made with communities, instead of for communities?

AMY BRENDMOEN: Robust community engagement is critical to developing solutions that are in the best interest of everyone, and not just in what we think their interest is. I have long advocated for deeper and more sustained community engagement that purposefully reaches out to under-engaged communities, meets them where they are at, and provides translation services if needed.

d. How will you separate your accountability to the public good you're your personal feelings?

AMY BRENDMOEN: I am open to input on how to improve processes or approaches without being personal. I draw on my personal experiences to help me understand issues and problems, but I am very aware that we bring different experiences and biases to the table and being open to learn, question, grow, improve is how we get to better outcomes.

10. What specific steps will you take to protect the right of workers – especially public sector workers – to bargain collectively? How will you encourage all workers to be part of a union, should they choose to?

AMY BRENDMOEN: Saint Paul is a strong labor city, and the unions have the full support of the city council. We work with them proactively to resolve upcoming issues and invite them to the table to problem solve on a regular basis