

2023 SPFE Public City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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?**

	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
James Lo	X	
Omar Syed	X	
Suz Woehrle	X	

2. Despite recent increases, public education statewide is severely underfunded, and has not kept pace with inflation. Currently, the DFL holds the House, the Senate, and the Governor’s office, and has proposed a massive increase in education spending, including indexing education funding to inflation.

- a. **Will you endorse, support, and campaign on fully funding our public schools?**

	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
James Lo	X	
Omar Syed	X	
Suz Woehrle	X	

3. **Do you support a moratorium on all new charter schools opening in St. Paul as well as a moratorium on any expansions of charter schools already in St. Paul?**

	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
James Lo	X	
Omar Syed	X	
Suz Woehrle	X	

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

	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
James Lo	X	
Omar Syed	X	
Suz Woehrle	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?**

**Anika Bowie** I am a product of Saint Paul Public Schools and my family have all benefited from earning an education from public schools. Our public schools have been a place that offered jobs to the community, give students an opportunity to learn, and gives our students a healthing nourishing meal. It's the foundation of a healthy thriving community

**James Lo** The values of public education for me are growth and opportunities. My family and I came to St. Paul as political refugees in 1994. I didn't know any English, not even the alphabet. I am proud of learning English in the classrooms and interacting with diverse classmates and teachers. Today, I have my high school, bachelor and master's degree because of public education. I value and give all the credits to St. Paul Public Schools.

The values for the city of Saint Paul are continuing to prepare students to be lifelong learners, prepare them for trade/college, be productive citizens, workforce and pay taxes. It helps students fulfill their potential, be well-rounded individuals, foster democracy, push for social justice, and give back to our community. Today, I'm honored to be working as a Counselor in SPPS to support and give back to our students, parents, and city.

**Omar Syed** My values on public education align with those of Saint Paul. As a refugee, I believe that education is the key to lifting families out of poverty. We must ensure that our public education system is inclusive, engaging, and is well-funded to best support students and staff. Our families entrust our public schools to teach, feed, and prepare our children. They are an integral part of our communities.

**Suz Woehrle** Public education is a collective investment in our future as a society. Any school that gets public dollars should be accountable to the same oversights. For example, no school that gets public funding should have non-union employees. They should be considered public employees and be able to unionize and have the same pay structure and regulations. I am staunchly pro-union and oppose any efforts to prevent workers from unionizing.

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?**

**Anika Bowie** I am a proud graduate, a former educator and juvenile coordinator, and had the privilege of delivering the commencement speech to Central's class of 2022. My neighbor was the teenager who was shot at Oxford Recreation center and I led a healing circle for two days in partnership with the teachers at Central. I frequently participate in many school initiatives such as clothing drives, fundraisers, and ceremonies that support the excellence of Saint Paul public schools. I even hired on current high school students that attend Highland Park and Central High School.

**James Lo** I am a dedicated and long-time Saint Paul Federation of Educators member, licensed school counselor at Harding High school, a proud product of

SPPS (Mississippi Creative Arts School, Cleveland Middle School- now Farnsworth Aerospace, Arlington High School- now Washington), and a lifetime public education champion.

**Omar Syed** My somali American community are beneficiaries of a great public education. Where I came from, my family and friends did not have this kind of opportunity.

**Suz Woehrle** I was endorsed by Zaagate Hernandez, teacher and basketball coach at Como Park High School. I attended public school K-12, in the Hopkins 270 school district. I went to school with Jen Westmoreland-Bouchard who is on the Hopkins School Board and am friends with Uriah Ward and Halla Henderson, who are on the Saint Paul School Board. I have two years experience tutoring students in the MPS public school system (Marcy and Sanford) as well as one year working at Higher Ground Academy, which is a charter school but which I found a very eye-opening experience as well.

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

**Anika Bowie** A "public education champion" is someone who advocates for and works to improve the quality, accessibility, and equity of public education. This may include individuals who work in the education system, such as teachers, administrators, and school board members, as well as community leaders, policymakers, and activists who support public education through advocacy, funding, and policy initiatives.

A public education champion may be someone who advocates for greater funding for schools, promotes the use of evidence-based teaching practices, and supports policies that ensure equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. They may also be individuals who work to create partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations, and who seek to address issues such as school segregation, the achievement gap, and the social and emotional well-being of students.

**James Lo** My definition comes from my lived experience attending SPPS, feeling a deep sense of gratitude for my SPFE teachers and support staff that influenced me to be a public education champion today. Their belief and investment in me shaped the person and community leader that I am today. That is why you'll see at our SPFE rallies, meetings, school board meetings, working hard for our students and parents at my school, and running for elected office to champion public education policy.

**Omar Syed** A public education champion is someone who fights for equal pay for teachers, fully-funding schools, advocates on behalf of students and teachers, and connects them to state and local government

**Suz Woehrle** A public education champion supports the teachers union and supports efforts to increase funding for public schools rather than forcing schools to compete against each other for dwindling education funding. A public education champion supports services that allow students to survive and thrive, provides affordable housing, safe and reliable transit, ensures that students feel safe on their way to and from school and while at school. I believe in the Minnesota Miracle: the

idea that any student in the state, regardless of their personal circumstances, should have a high-quality public education made available to them, as I did growing up. If elected I would be sure to use my platform to work towards our common goals where the city's resources can be employed to the benefit of our students and teachers.

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

**Anika Bowie** As City Council Candidate for Ward 1, I am seeking an endorsement from SPFE because I believe I am the best advocate for teachers and the can echo the need for more funding and social emotional supports in schools. I am seeking partnership with one of the largest unions across the state to get more resources for the people who work and live in Saint Paul. Labor unions are under attack across the country and we need a champion that can address racial equity issues, bring together a diversity of voices, and leverage power with our members at the state level to champion our policy.

**James Lo** I am asking for your endorsement because I believe the city and state can do more to support our students, parents, and educators. As an active SPFE member and public education champion, I am prepared and ready to fight to achieve our policy goals, but I cannot do this work alone. Though I am the best and most qualified candidate. I need your endorsement and volunteers. Together we can win to co-govern together, work together, and we will rise together. I understand the issue better and more in depth than any candidates running for city council. If you will endorse me and work with my team to win in November, I will use my position as the Ward 1 Councilmember to fight for our students, parents, and teachers to ensure the state provides the funding we need.

**Omar Syed** As a city council candidate, I am running to represent thousands of people in my ward, many of whom are parents to children in the public school system or are children themselves in public schools. A large majority of students are students of color, part of refugee communities, and in low-income families. I am seeking an endorsement from SPFE because I am not only a reflection of our community, but I am a direct link to it. I want to build access for our families to have a relationship with SPFE and to work together to support education.

**Suz Woehrle** I have seen first-hand the negative impacts of large class sizes, funding cuts and other anti-education initiatives during my work in MPS. I do not support the common core or similar agendas that seek to take agency and bargaining power away from public school educators. I am grateful for the work you do and will use my candidacy and my office to support public schools and the SPFE in any way possible. I want people to know that I will do anything I can to support teachers and students.

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

**Anika Bowie** I envision us working in partnership with SPFE by standing in solidarity with the teachers if there was a strike, speaking publicly and boldly in favor of teachers safety at the school board, and centering the needs for the teacher union prior to taking a vote on an issue that will impact the students.

**James Lo** I envision us co-governing together, regular check in meetings with SPFE leadership, and having clear communication. In the event that there is a disagreement, I believe we must be able to analyze the disagreement and how we can get to an agreement. A disagreement is good because it's really the start of figuring out how to get an agreement. I think good and thorough policy starts with a disagreement so there can be meaningful discussion.

**Omar Syed** I envision working in partnership with SPFE by giving one another access to increase each others' goals in improving education. As a city councilperson, I want to work with SPFE to discuss short- and long-term policy goals in how we can support our teachers livelihoods, improve student testing scores, and upgrade our facilities. I would like to use my position to also help SPFE build relations with other electeds. Most importantly, I would like to educate more Somali and refugee members about the work that SPFE does. When we disagree, I believe that we can still work together to find common ground in our shared interest in protecting teachers' rights. I believe in having tough conversations to find solutions or compromises—not empty conversations that lead to nowhere.

**Suz Woehrle** As a member of the Saint Paul City Council I see myself as a collaborator with you in any situation where our interests and policy concerns align, which I anticipate would be often. I would shadow an SPPS educator to find out what their day is like. I would keep up-to-date on issues facing our public schools by attending school board meetings or reading the minutes if I were not able to attend. I would use my platform to show support and lobby the state legislature to ensure friendly legislation is passed. I don't foresee us disagreeing but I am open to dialogue to work out any potential conflicts. I will join you on the picket line if necessary, with snacks!

3. The rampant growth of charter schools in the city of Saint Paul has caused great harm to our public schools and our communities. Per the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) the, the [number of charter school programs has grown to 81](#) in just the city of Saint Paul. This rise has led to the [resegregation of schools and communities](#), and includes a Saint Paul charter school that has been [under investigation since 2019](#) for investment practices.

- a. **Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) recently made the decision to close or combine several schools due to declining enrollment. Out of control growth of charter schools has led to the disastrous result of more “seats” available than there are school-age children in the city. Unlike charter schools, SPPS must be available to serve all children. What is the role of the City Council in supporting SPPS?**

**Anika Bowie** As a city council member, supporting SPPS is crucial to the city's overall education system. I will support SPPS in the following five ways: Advocate for increased funding, Support the public infrastructure, Promote initiatives to improve student outcomes, Address issues of equity and access, Collaborate with SPPS to promote community engagement.

By leveraging and growing my existing relationships with state policymakers, I will work to promote education funding and policies that benefit SPPS. Additionally, I will prioritize funding for infrastructure projects that benefit the district and improve our roads and public space. As an former Educator and Equity Trainer, I will continue to work to address issues of equity and access, such as the achievement gap and racial segregation in our schools. Ultimately, I aim to create a more equitable and vibrant public education system that benefits all residents of the city through collaborative efforts with the district and community.

**James Lo** First, the City Council has the opportunity to cap and slow down the growth of charter schools. The city must also hold charter schools accountable to provide annual review of charter school performance since they require the city to approve and allow pass through funding from the federal government. Second, the city needs to create a diverse, vibrant, safe, and thriving city to attract more families to live in St. Paul and increase enrollment. Third, the City Council enacted an ordinance to provide an ongoing audit of charter schools with a penalty matrix and termination of license to ensure charter schools are accountable to students and parents.

**Omar Syed** My Somali American community is struggling with the problems of enrolling our kids in SPPS or charter schools. We need the support of SPFE to provide more resources and support for my community, so that we can understand why SPPS is important. As City Council, with the support of SPFE I can help convey the importance of SPPS to my immigrant refugee community. We are an emerging community, and we have lots of kids who need proper education

**Suz Woehrle** The Saint Paul City Council can do a lot to support our public schools! We can use our positions to encourage people to enroll their children in the district, we can provide culturally-appropriate resources to teachers to make our classrooms as welcoming and supportive as possible. We can boost the signal of the SPFE so that more people are aware of the demands of the union. We can offer our full-throated support to our teachers and show up for them during negotiations. We can oppose anti-union, pro-testing initiatives that place additional burdens on educators while having no appreciable impact on student outcomes.

**b. Saint Paul Public Schools provides more than classroom education for students and families. Robust, well-funded public schools help to create stable communities, increased property values, and play a vital role in desegregating our city. What specific steps will you, as a member of the City Council take to slow charter school growth AND support enrollment in SPPS?**

**Anika Bowie** As a member of the City Council, I will take the following specific steps to slow charter school growth and support enrollment in SPPS:

Increase funding for SPPS to ensure that it can compete with charter schools and offer high-quality education programs to students and families.

Promote public school enrollment by advocating for programs that increase awareness of the benefits of public schools and partnering with community organizations to encourage enrollment.

Advocate for charter school accountability by working with state legislators to increase regulations on charter schools and require them to provide the same level of transparency and accountability as public schools.

Encourage collaboration between SPPS and the community to ensure that the voices of teachers, students, families, and community members are heard in the decision-making process.

**James Lo** The City Council has an opportunity to enact an ordinance to put a cap on charter schools in St. Paul and no new build once a charter school is out of business. The city can work to close down charter schools that are found guilty of fraud and other legal problems.

**Omar Syed** I would like to work with SPFE and SPPS to have a better appeal to the Somali community by helping them build a community that is engaging and inviting to Somali parents. The Somali community makes up a large portion of our ward's population, but many choose to go to charter schools because their friends and families attend those schools. We have to work together to bring families' trust in the public school system.

**Suz Woehrle** I am a big proponent of transparency. Wherever possible, I will share data concerning the financial solvency of charter schools in Saint Paul, or lack thereof. I will lobby for legislation that supports the union and makes charter schools subject to the same regulations as public schools.

**c. Will you advocate and support a comprehensive study on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact) and steps to address the harms done by unchecked charter school growth? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?**

**Anika Bowie** As a future member of the City Council, I strongly support a comprehensive study on the impact of charter schools in our communities, as it is important to understand the effects of unchecked charter school growth on our tax base, land use, neighborhood impact, and segregation.

I would partner with educational experts, community organizations, and local government officials to conduct this study. This would involve collaborating with education professionals from SPPS and charter schools, as well as community organizations that represent diverse perspectives on education and public policy. I would also work with local government officials who are involved in education policy and funding, such as the Mayor's Office, the Saint Paul Public Schools Board of Education, and state legislators.

The study would provide data-driven recommendations for addressing the negative impacts of charter school growth and promoting the well-being of our communities.

**James Lo** Yes, I will advocate and support a comprehensive study. It is so long overdue.

I think it is important to partner with the county, SPPS, community, and national organizations that have been successful at holding charter schools accountable.

The stakeholders must include parents, teachers, students, elected officials, and the county. I included the county because harming students and families also drain the county public health.

I am open to ideas from SPPS.

**Omar Syed** Yes, absolutely. I would partner with SPFE, SPPS, and studies done by academic institutions. I would also seek out community feedback about their experiences in charter schools. The stakeholders would be the Somali, Hmong, Karen, Latinx, black, and white community members, teachers, staff, and more.

**Suz Woehrle YES.** I am opposed to segregation. Ideally, each school's student population would be representative of their respective community, rather than hand-picked by a committee to maximize test scores and GPAs. I would partner with parents, SPPE members, disability advocacy groups and other community groups who oppose the systems that undermine accessible, integrated, high-quality public education.

4. The COVID pandemic will have a long-term impact on the city of Saint Paul. In addition to loss of life, many of our social safety nets were brought to the breaking point. Many people, especially our students, are still dealing with the after-effects, including disrupted learning, mental health crises, and financial losses. Essential workers, once lauded by lawmakers for staffing our hospitals, keeping our schools going, our cities running, and our grocery stores open are now facing criticism for rising costs – while corporations made some of the highest profits ever seen.

- a. **One of the biggest challenges our community faces is the lack of access to reliable, high-speed internet and devices – this existing challenge was exacerbated during COVID. What steps can the City Council take to make free, high-speed internet available across the city?**

**Anika Bowie** The City Council can take several steps to make free, high-speed internet available across the city. First, the council can allocate funds to develop and implement a city-wide broadband plan. This plan should prioritize providing internet access to underserved and marginalized communities. Second, the council can partner with internet service providers to negotiate more affordable rates for residents, especially those facing financial hardship. Third, the council can work with local schools and libraries to ensure that they have the necessary resources to provide internet access to students and community members outside of regular operating hours. Finally, the council can incentivize private companies to invest in broadband infrastructure in areas where it is lacking, such as low-income neighborhoods. By taking these steps, the council can help bridge the digital divide and ensure that all residents have access to the resources they need to succeed in today's economy.

**James Lo** The City Council can renegotiate with COMCAST and other high speed providers to hotspot devices with free access to low income families. The city can invest in fiber across the city to ensure residents have opportunity to access the Internet.



**Omar Syed** City Council should work directly with the state to get funding for free high-speed internet, whether that is to make it readily available to connect to across the city or to cover costs for individual homes.

**Suz Woehrle** I support the expansion of municipal wifi through improved access to USI by making it free. I have been a big supporter of municipal wifi even before COVID. Children who attend school in-person still benefit from being able to use high-speed wifi when at home.

**b. It is possible that we will experience another pandemic. What actions can the City Council take now, to prepare for that possibility? How will you protect and support the public sector workers that keep our city functioning during a public health crisis?**

**Anika Bowie** There are several actions that the City Council can take to prepare for another pandemic:

Increase funding for emergency preparedness: The city can allocate more funds to emergency preparedness measures, such as increasing the stockpile of medical supplies and equipment, enhancing communication infrastructure, and developing contingency plans for public services.

Develop and implement a pandemic response plan: The city can work with health officials and other stakeholders to create a comprehensive response plan that outlines how the city will respond to future pandemics.

Increase support for public health programs: The city can allocate more resources to public health programs that can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, such as vaccination programs, disease monitoring, and education campaigns.

Increase support for essential workers: The city can provide additional support to essential workers during a pandemic, such as hazard pay, personal protective equipment (PPE), and mental health services.

**James Lo** As a Council Member, I will champion and lead a study of St. Paul during COVID with recommendations on how to protect and support public sector workers, families and students, and to include a plan on how to prepare for the next pandemic.

**Omar Syed** The City Council should talk directly to public sector workers to see what worked and did not work for them during the pandemic. By finding out what is sustainable and effective, we can prepare plans to implement later on that will maximize the efforts public sector workers while best protecting them. We should also be training and encouraging people to take on these jobs.

**Suz Woehrle** I support requiring workers and students to be vaccinated and universal masking for COVID prevention/mitigation. In the event of another pandemic I support implementing whatever health measures are recommended by the CDC.

5. Saint Paul, like many cities, is struggling to balance the increased needs of community against increasingly tight budgets. The solution has often been increases in property taxes and fees. Mayor Carter is currently [seeking a sales tax increase](#) to help cover the cost of necessary improvements to our roads and parks. While Saint Paul residents are often willing to take on the additional financial burden to care for our city, many are at the financial breaking point, this system is ultimately unsustainable, and has the most damaging financial impact on our citizens that can least afford it.

- a. **Wealthy corporations saw some of their largest profits during the pandemic, while our residents struggled financially. Will you encourage the City Council to revisit the use of PILOTs (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) to ease the tax burden on our residents? Will you support a percentage of a PILOTs to be dedicated to funding SPPS? What steps will you take as a City Council member to pursue PILOTs?**

**Anika Bowie** As a City Council member, I strongly support the use of PILOTs as a way for non-profits to contribute to their local communities and alleviate the tax burden on residents. I recognize the important role that non-profits play in our city, but also believe that they should be able to provide financial support to the communities they serve.

I would encourage organizations such as NDC, Lutheran Social Services, and the Wilder Foundation to consider contributing a percentage of their budget to support municipal services in Saint Paul. I believe that this is a fair and equitable way for non-profits to support the city and its residents, without taking away their tax-exempt status.

To pursue PILOTs, I would work with my fellow City Council members to explore different options and strategies for engaging with non-profits. This might involve reaching out to individual organizations to gauge their interest and willingness to contribute, as well as creating a formal framework for negotiating and implementing PILOT agreements. I would also seek input from community members and organizations to ensure that any PILOT agreements are transparent, equitable, and aligned with the needs and priorities of the city.

Overall, I believe that PILOTs can be an effective tool for promoting community engagement and supporting municipal services, and I am committed to exploring all available options for implementing this approach in Saint Paul.

**James Lo** Yes, I am very interested in learning more about the PILOT model and how the funds are allocated back into the community. Yes, I believe a percentage of that should go to support SPPS.

**Omar Syed** Yes I would encourage the city to revisit PILOTs and I would support it. I would work with all the other council members to gain support and with the mayor.

**Suz Woehrle** I spoke recently with Emily Dickinson, a former candidate for Saint Paul City Council (and supporter of my candidacy) and she educated me about PILOT and how successful it has been in Boston. If elected I will do whatever I can to implement this program, which seems like one obvious solution to our city's revenue shortage.

**b. TIF districts are used by the city to spur development. TIF districts also result in less funding for SPPS and the city. It is also often unclear on how some projects meet the "But for" test. What are your ideas on how the use of TIF can be restructured to minimize the financial impact on our school district and community, and still support growth?**

**Anika Bowie** As a City Council member in a district with large development that has TIF, I understand the concerns around the impact on tax revenue and funding for SPPS and the city. TIF districts are a valuable tool for spurring development, but it is important to ensure that they are used in a responsible and transparent way that benefits the community as a whole.

To address the financial impact of TIF on our school district and community, I would advocate for a more balanced approach to generating tax revenue. This might involve exploring alternative sources of revenue, such as sales tax or other fees, as well as encouraging more property development to grow property tax revenue.

Additionally, I would work to ensure that TIF projects are rigorously evaluated and meet the "But for" test, which requires that the project would not have been possible without the TIF financing. This would help to ensure that TIF is being used in a responsible and effective way, and that the community is seeing real benefits from these projects.

Another approach might be to consider using TIF in a more targeted way, focused on projects that have a clear and direct benefit to the community, such as affordable housing or infrastructure improvements. This could help to minimize the impact on tax revenue while still supporting growth and development in our district.

Overall, I believe that the use of TIF can be restructured in a way that minimizes the financial impact on our school district and community while still supporting growth and development.

**James Lo** I think TIF can be a useful tool for development but it also takes away property taxes that could be funding SPPS. Frankly, TIF creates a benefit for the developers at the same time creates a burden on city services and takes away from SPPS. The City Council seems to have an opportunity to explore the possibility of allowing a percentage of the TIF to go back to support SPPS, either at the front end of the deal in the administrative fees or the back end after TIF is created.

**Omar Syed** Everything that involves city development, especially housing must have clear goals, intentions and be able to identify who are the most impacted. Any development project that wants to happen in Ward 1 should always be held accountable by the residence, especially working class families.

**Suz Woehrle** I'm not sure I understand the question but I support using a portion of TIF dollars to support our public schools.

6. 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?**

**Anika Bowie** As a member of the City Council, I recognize the important role that educators and students play in shaping the future of our city. Therefore, I believe it is essential to seek out their input and engage them as stakeholders in decision-making processes.

To do this, I would host regular town hall meetings, forums, and listening sessions to hear from educators and students directly about their concerns and ideas. I would also work to establish formal channels of communication with the Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) and other education stakeholders, to ensure that their voices are heard and their perspectives are taken into account when making decisions that affect them.

**James Lo** As Councilmember, I plan to have regular meetings with SPFE leadership, parents, SPPS, and students to be informed of their needs and concerns. These check-in meetings are important for me to hear from SPFE, parents, and students, but also to share what is happening at the city level to promote transparency and create a strong partnership.

**Omar Syed** Being in community and attending meetings while listening to and for educators is my primary goal. I want to learn as much from SPPS and see what I can do to help support them from the city. I am in community all the time, so I can easily share this information.

**Suz Woehrle** I am already friends with several public educators and parents. I plan to visit a public school soon to see what a day in the life of a public school educator looks and feels like. I would love to keep SPFE updated about developments at City Hall that will impact students, educators and parents. I plan to attend school board meetings. I hope to learn from working with schools and share information at the same time.

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

**Anika Bowie** Infrastructure: Cities can partner with school districts to help fund and build new school facilities or renovate existing ones. For example, the city can help fund the construction of new sports fields or playgrounds for the school district to use during non-school hours.

Transportation: Cities can partner with school districts to provide transportation services for students. For example, the city can help provide discounted transit passes for students to use to get to and from school.

Public Safety: Cities and school districts can collaborate on programs to promote safety and reduce crime in and around schools. For example, the city can work with the city to implement crime prevention programs that help keep students safe.

To ensure that input from SPFE, parents, and students are taken into consideration, the city and school district can hold town hall meetings, conduct surveys, or organize focus groups to gather feedback on what partnerships would be most beneficial.

**James Lo** As mentioned above I plan to have regular meetings with SPFE leadership, parents, and students to hear their concerns and needs. I plan to also seek policy ideas and solutions from SPFE, especially policy that has an impact on public education.

**Omar Syed** I see the school district and the city to be in better communications. Too many times we are all not speaking to each other because of political or personal reasons. If we can all work together as a city and a school district, parents and students who benefit from our service will only thrive.

**Suz Woehrle** Wrap-around services provided through our schools seem like one example. Ensuring the safety of our students on their way to school through the use of traffic mitigation and pedestrian and bicycle safety measures seems like another. I see many opportunities for our interests to align and for our work to be a collaboration.

7. 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?**

**Anika Bowie** Co-governance and people-centered democracy refer to a collaborative approach to decision-making where elected officials work closely with stakeholders, including community members, to make decisions that best serve the public good. This approach involves active engagement, transparency, and accountability.

**James Lo** I believe that co-governance means accountability, transparency and governing with the people, and have the people (especially underrepresented people of color and women) at the table coming up with solutions but are also responsible for implementing such policy initiatives. People-centered democracy to me is politics, policy, and democratic processes and systems that are centered and driven by people and not corporations or wealthy individuals.

**Omar Syed** Co-governance means that we are not only working with City or other elected officials, but also to people who are on the grounds like SPFE. People-centered democracy means that we should be accountable to those who put us in the position of power and decision making, and make sure those decisions are beneficial to all.

**Suz Woehrle** I plan to make myself available to the community to hear a variety of viewpoints and to be held accountable to my platform promises. I plan to carry the voices of the people to City Hall.

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

**Anika Bowie** As a City Council member, I believe in the importance of co-governance and people-centered democracy. This means engaging with a diverse range of groups and individuals in our community to ensure that all voices are heard and represented in the decision-making process.

In terms of guidance, I would look to a variety of groups and individuals, including SPFE members and teachers, parents and families, students, community organizations, and other stakeholders who are impacted by the policies and decisions we make. I believe in the importance of seeking input and feedback from all these groups before making a decision or taking a vote on any issue that affects our community.

In particular, I would make it a priority to engage with SPFE members and teachers at specific schools that are impacted by our policies and decisions. I recognize the critical role that educators play in our community, and I believe that their insights and perspectives are essential to making informed and effective decisions.

Overall, my approach to co-governance and people-centered democracy would be to prioritize open communication, transparency, and accountability, and to seek input and guidance from a diverse range of voices in our community. By working together, we can ensure that our policies and decisions are truly reflective of the needs and priorities of the community as a whole.

**James Lo** I will look to SPFE, community members, and allies for guidance.

**Omar Syed** Our faith based organizations, our Mosques, other electeds, labor unions, working class families, and our coalition of community members throughout Saint Paul Ward 1.

**Suz Woehrle** The people I trust to guide my decision-making come from a variety of backgrounds and include educators, artists, public-sector employees, non-profit organizations, unions, and friends and family members.

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

**Anika Bowie** To ensure that decisions are made with communities rather than for them, I would prioritize community engagement and input. This would involve conducting town hall meetings, creating advisory committees, and soliciting feedback through surveys and other means. I would also prioritize transparency by ensuring that information about decision-making processes and outcomes is readily available to the public.

**James Lo** As a public education champion and SPFE member, I will make my decisions carefully based on community input, data and research, listening to allies and stakeholders. I take my time to analyze each decision and calculate any unintended outcomes and what measures need to be implemented to mitigate unforeseen problems.

**Omar Syed** I will make sure that there are always constituents and community members from Ward 1 at the table.

**Suz Woehrle** I believe city council meetings should be livestreamed for maximum transparency. I will update my website and social media with regular updates about what is going on in the community and the work I plan to focus on.

**d. How will you separate your accountability to the public good and your personal feelings?**

**Anika Bowie** As a City Council member, it is essential that I prioritize the public good over my personal feelings or biases. To do so, I will approach each issue and decision with an open mind, carefully considering all available information, and seeking input from a diverse range of perspectives.

I will also be guided by the values and principles that I have committed to as a public servant, including a commitment to equity, justice, and transparency. I recognize that my personal feelings or biases may not always align with these values, and I will work to set them aside in order to make decisions that serve the public good and advance the interests of our community.

Additionally, I will seek to be held accountable by the community, and to engage in ongoing, open communication with constituents and community partners. This will help me to stay grounded in the priorities and perspectives of those I serve, and to ensure that I am making decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of our community.

**James Lo** As an experienced SPFE educator, I rely on thorough research, data, community inputs, and understanding of the laws and city regulations to fully analyze a policy decision for the public good. These skills and experiences allow me to confidently champion bold outcomes for our students, parents, and educators.

**Omar Syed** Yes

**Suz Woehrle** I don't see where there would be a conflict between my feelings and the public good as I would only want to do what would benefit the public good. As such, I don't foresee any conflict. I hope people will hold me accountable to my promises as I have every intention to relentlessly pursue every last one of them or let people know the reason why.

**8. 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?**

**Anika Bowie** To protect the right of workers, especially public sector workers, to bargain collectively, I would prioritize the establishment and protection of labor rights. This would involve working with labor unions and advocacy groups to strengthen labor protections, ensure fair compensation and working conditions, and promote workplace democracy. I would also support policies that encourage all workers to be part of a union, such as facilitating union organizing efforts and providing resources to educate workers about their rights.

**James Lo** As a Council Member, I will continue to educate public employees about their rights, the importance and benefit of organized labor. I will always support the right to organized labor, it is the last few tools we have left to fight corporate greed. I look forward to collaborating with SPFE and other unions to continue to educate and advocate for the protection of workers' rights, especially for public sector workers and to bargain collectively.

Together, we will rise and co-govern to meet the needs and challenges St. Paul Public Schools today by following our long SPFE history of advocating for policies that improve public education for our students and members through collective actions.

**Omar Syed** Yes, I encourage workers to be apart of unions, if they choose. I come from a working class family, so I know the importance of making sure people like me and the many other working families ability to work is protected all the time.

**Suz Woehrle** I will use my voice to defend the right of every worker to unionize and participate in collective bargaining. I hope that people will see me as a resource to assist should they decide to organize their workplace.