



Questionnaire for Billings 2025 City Council Election.

The members of the Billings Firefighters Union, IAFF Local 521, are committed to protecting the lives, property, and well-being of our community. As we consider endorsements for the upcoming city council election, we are seeking your positions on issues that directly affect public safety, emergency response, firefighter health and wellness, and the future of Billings.

Please respond to the following questions as thoroughly as possible. Your answers will help our membership make informed decisions about who will best support the citizens of Billings and the men and women who serve them.

1. Please provide a brief bio.

My name is Patrick Olp - I am a lifelong resident of Billings and love our community with my whole heart. I am engaged to my fiancée Danielle, and we have 5 (!) kids between us. I am a business owner and employer, and I go out of my way to make sure I provide my employees with above market wages, a good work culture, and show them appreciation for the work they do. I plan to spend the rest of my life here and want to participate meaningfully in my city.

2. What made you want to run for city council?

First and foremost, my political philosophy is that we have an obligation to one another - we live in a **community**, and we need to take care of one another. I feel like that's been lost in our discourse in the last several years, and I intend to be a leader who prioritizes collaboration, respect, and communication. I also believe that if good people who have the requisite abilities and time to participate don't step up, bad people will, and that's worse for all of us.

3. What is your leadership style and how do you intend to bring a consensus to the council?

As a leader, I believe it is incumbent upon me to remember that I have two ears and one mouth, and that I need to listen twice as much as I talk. So much of this process has just been about showing up, listening, and showing people that I actually care enough to put any assumptions I've made aside and take the time to understand them, their needs, their challenges, and their vision for the future. I am a collaborator at heart and believe that good leadership exists when people don't try to be a hero. No one single person is going to be the one who fixes all of the things (or anything, frankly), and I believe in the power of teamwork, accountability, and course correcting when I get it wrong.

4. What do you see as the role and/or function of city government?

I think a city government should exist to fund and resource our first responders, keep our community safe, address infrastructure needs as they arise, plan for the future, attract and retain talent, fund, build, and maintain amenities, pay attention to and adopt new ways of doing things as it becomes available, and provide accountability, accessibility, and transparency to the public as the body that has been entrusted with the tax dollars to do said things.

5. What is the number one issue facing Billings for the next city council, and how do you intend to address it?

Obviously our budget shortfall will create a number of problems for the community, and as a leader, my approach will be to work with city staff to understand what our options are, bring stakeholders from key parts of the city together, and find a workable solution for the next couple of years as we weather this particular storm. We need to find the will to raise capital for our city in new ways beyond just further taxing homeowners, and I believe that as leaders we will need to build a case and consensus for local option or state sales tax to provide more revenue for our city as it grows.

6. How would you determine and consider the agendas of other council members to be the most productive and prioritize the conflicting demands of Billings?

I think that coming to council with an agenda absent of getting to know the rest of the "team" so to speak prioritizes one person over the group, and I hate that approach. The needs of the city won't magically reset when a new council comes in, and I believe that the new council will need to work ahead of being elected to understand the issues and quickly find ways to act together to enable city leadership to address those needs.

7. How would you work with other entities to balance asks of the public for funding through levies and bonds?

I think our levies and bond system is broken and unsustainable. In a world that is increasingly expensive, it is not tenable to continue to expect homeowners alone to shoulder the funding of public safety, schools, and every other need that our city faces, and I think that we need to call a spade a spade and find ways to explain to the public that if we want to keep doing things the way that we've always done them, we'll continue to get what we've always gotten.

8. What do you see as the role of the Union in representing the 144 members of Local 521? Unions are of vital importance to labor, and I see the role of unions as indispensable in the world we live in to advocate for their membership. I believe fully in the right to organize, and I support unions universally.

9. Currently Fire Station 5 is undergoing a renovation that is long overdue. There are four other stations that need considerable renovations and a growing need for a new station to support growth. What is your stance on maintaining what is currently in use versus building new stations?

I'm open to hearing from BFD leadership on their perspective because as someone on the outside, I don't think it matters what I think without having the opportunity to visit with and hear from BFD on this issue. I think generally speaking, my initial (without any input yet, and totally willing to have my mind changed!) thoughts would be that it doesn't make much sense to build new facilities in far flung parts of the community when we have four buildings that have been put off for too long. Again, that's my uninformed opinion, and as always, I'm willing to change my mind based on the opinions of people who are actually boots on the ground.

10. The men and women of Local 521 currently respond to about 18,000 to 20,000 calls for service each year. Departments throughout the nation that respond to a similar number of calls have between 200 and 250 members taking those calls. Currently L521 has 144 members. What do you see as solutions to add staffing?

I think this problem is multifaceted - we need to be able to raise revenue commensurate with our needs, and until we find other funding sources besides property tax, we're going to have to get increasingly creative with how we ask the public for more funding. I believe we also have an incredible need to find better ways to attract and retain talent to our city. This involves looking at our city holistically and evaluating what our needs are from a recruiting standpoint to better understand what we can do to make Billings more attractive to people who would want to come here and raise a family. In the ecosystem of a city, amenities like parks, trails, and vibrant shopping/restaurants all matter.

11. Firefighters face significant risks from cancer, PTSD, and other occupational hazards. How would you support initiatives to improve firefighter health and wellness programs?

This is a great question and I would welcome ideas from leadership about how they see programs being implemented in a way that was meaningful and didn't just feel like a circus trick or cheap handout to address a very real need. The way this question is asked leads me to believe that someone, somewhere, has had some good ideas and that they were maybe not answered in a constructive fashion. I know that John Doe on the street

maybe sees two or three traumatic events in his lifetime, while our first responders see hundreds, and they deserve to have access to mental health resources, leave, and wellness programs that show that their work is seen and valued as such.

12. How will you approach contract negotiations with Local 521 if elected to city council?

In a way that shows that I am a strong advocate for our first responders while also balancing the reality of living in a budget crunch. To be perfectly clear, I 100% support the union, the right to advocate for better pay and conditions, and I will work diligently to make sure our first responders feel prioritized and seen. I also commit to having an open door communication policy when it comes to communicating with BFD as far as it is legally permissible.

13. How would you support community risk reduction initiatives such as fire prevention education, wildfire preparedness, and public health partnerships?

So much of public safety as a concept starts with getting front of kids when they're young. The work we do today in those programs may not be seen as paying dividends immediately, but the work will go to support our community and first responders in the future, and I think that every available study shows that early childhood education leads to better outcomes for everyone, so I would support them as they come up and as I am able either as someone who removes roadblocks, or finds ways to carve out funding for said initiatives.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses. Your answers will be shared with our membership as we consider our endorsement. Please return your completed questionnaire to Local 521 by September 1st, 2025 at 5p.m.