



**2023**

# **BOARD OF ALDERMEN**

**VOTER GUIDE**

**WARD 2**

**MARCH 7TH, APRIL 4TH ELECTION DAY**



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## **Important Dates**



**Register to vote by 02/08**



**Request a mail in absentee ballot by 2/22**



**Vote absentee in person by 03/06**



**March 7th, April 4th ELECTION DAY**

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## **Role of the BOA**

**The Board of Aldermen is the legislative body of the City of St. Louis and creates, passes, and amends local laws, as well as approves the City's budget every year. There are now fourteen aldermen, after ward reduction, one from each ward in the City and a Board of Aldermen President.**

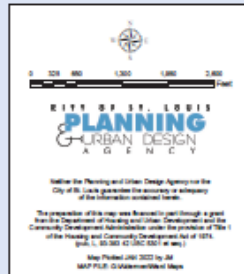
**All candidates running for the Board of Alderman were sent these questions.  
Answers are copied verbatim without any editing.**



# WARD 2

Adopted on 12/27/2021

City of St. Louis - Planning & Urban Design Agency



# Voting Locations

Polls open from 6am-7pm

**YOU CAN VOTE AT ANY LOCATION.**

**Buder Library**

4401 Hampton Ave

**Central Library**

1303 Olive St

**Friendly Temple Missionary Church**

5544 Dr. MLK Dr

**Hamilton Elementary School**

5819 West Minster Pl

**Missouri School For The Blind**

3867 Magnolia Ave

**Nance Elementary School**

8959 Riverview Blvd

**Newstead M. B. Church**

725 Bellerive Blvd

**Our Lady of Sorrows Church**

5020 Rhodes Ave

**Salvation Army Temple Corps**

2740 Arsenal St

**Schlaflly Library**

225 N. Euclid Ave

**Woodward Elementary School**

725 Bellerive Blvd

## Voter ID Requirements

**Show one of the forms of acceptable identification and sign the poll book to obtain your ballot:**

- A nonexpired Missouri driver or non-driver license;
- A nonexpired military ID, including a veteran's ID card;
- A nonexpired United States passport; or
- Another photo ID issued by the United States or the state of Missouri which is either not expired or expired after the date of the most recent general election.



# Ward 2 Candidates



**Katie Bellis-Ward**



**Phill Menendez**



**Tom Oldenburg**

# Question 1

Please provide a 250-word introduction explaining why you feel that voters in your ward should elect you as their representation to the Board of Aldermen.

## Katie Bellis-Ward

I've been a grassroots and political advocate in St Louis for many years and have deep ties to community resources. I have worked in customer service and in quality improvement and thus am well equipped to listen to my community and work to meet our collective needs. We are in a moment when the city has access to an unprecedented amount of funding in order to make improvements and bolster infrastructure and we need to make sure we have transparency around how this money is being spent and are investing not just in patching up the status quo, but in implementing creative solutions to problems our city faces, like street safety, policing and education. I'm ready to work with our new and improved board of aldermen to build the future of our city in ways that work to grow our city but also ensure the care for our most vulnerable.

## Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg

Did not respond.

# Question 2

What do you believe to be the most important role(s) of an Alderperson?

## Katie Bellis-Ward

The most important role of the Alderperson is listening to their constituents. If one is elected to represent the people, then the key to doing so faithfully is to be present, to truly listen, and to seek many viewpoints. To always be willing to grow one's expertise. To be open to having one's mind changed by receiving new information. To weigh the needs and desires of the many against the needs and desires of the few. To make oneself available (within reasonable boundaries) and accessible via multiple forms of communication. To show up to community events to seek even the voices of those who do have the privilege of the time and resources to seek you out. To have the humility to get one's hands dirty in doing acts of service in order to earn one's place in the community, and thereby the trust of those who otherwise would not speak to you.

## Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg

Did not respond.

## Question 3

**What is your plan for maximizing community participation around legislative processes in order to make things more accessible and transparent in St. Louis?**

### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I would love for information about the movement of STL City government to be available online in a more approachable manner. Right now you can find information about what meetings are occurring and what board bills are in play - if you know how to look for them and if you can wade through the bureaucratic language. When organizations like the League of Women Voters (LWV) compile the voter guides for every election each measure is broken down into plain language, accompanied by the official wording. We can rely on journalism to do a certain amount of contextualizing and transparency - but not consistently and not without bias. I would love for the city to have a website that has nonpartisan explainers, a daily breakdown of all of the legislative activities that are happening that day and information on how to participate, and links to context - videos of meetings leading up to that one, text of measures being discussed, etc.

Citizen input also needs to play more of a role in decisions being made in city government. While on the Citizens Advisory Committee for Capital Expenditures we asked for an equity based lens to be brought to the way we were being presented information, and were told that the city was unwilling to make changes to their presentation process. In watching the Capital Committee meetings the input of the Committee is also taken into account only briefly and in passing. The Board of Aldermen has taken a great step in this direction by offering the option for public testimony on every Board Bill, and we can continue to move in this direction in seeking greater transparency and truly incorporating the voices of city residents.

### **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## Question 4

**TIF: Although TIFs and other sorts of tax incentives and credits are intended to be used to spur development in blighted areas, in St. Louis they are overwhelmingly used in wealthier areas. What should be done differently (please be specific)?**

### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I would use subsidies very sparingly as every subsidy takes money from vital public goods like schools, libraries and refuse services. With that said, sometimes we do need to uplift businesses, especially in areas which have been neglected by policy for too long.

The sponsor of it has said that development (albeit a different project) could happen on that spot without tax abatement.

I would also support ensuring that contracts are only awarded to unions or contractors with a history of abiding by the Living Wage Ordinance, and the city taking up responsible bidding language.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## **Question 5**

**What role do you believe that Alderpersons should play in education in the City of St. Louis?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

Alderpersons should protect education as a public good, one that should be funded equitably, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of students in lower income areas of the city where communities have systematically been under-resourced for so long. We also advance the cause of equitable education by advocating for policy that lifts all people. In a city where children are housing insecure, we support education by providing them rental protections. In a city where children live below the federal poverty level, we support education by providing a Guaranteed Basic Income. In a city where children have been diagnosed with asthma at overwhelming rates, we support education by providing further environmental protections.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## **Question 6**

**How would you more effectively address intra community violence and harm in the city of St. Louis, and more specifically in your ward?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

My ward could be held up as a kind of microcosm for the experience of public safety in the city. St. Louis Hills has a network of security cameras and is currently fundraising to have private security for the ward, after engaging in a 4 week trial period. A bill has just been proposed which creates a Special Tax District for St. Louis Hills and would pay for this security force and community improvements.



This leads to a plethora of questions on the repercussions on the surrounding communities, questions on what private security people are permitted to do to enforce laws, who they are accountable to, and so on. These special tax districts are being marked out in more affluent areas around the city and only serve to highlight the disparities across our city.

I would like to see the success of the Cure Violence and Prop S Youth Diversion programs continued. I would also listen to the Violence Prevention Committee recommendations, help community groups write grants to utilize the Prop S funds, and advocate that city residents take advantage of the free gun locks provided by St. Louis Public Library.

I would also work to foster community as a means of improving public safety. A friend told me about something called Porch Fridays that used to be common in South City - neighborhood residents would all come out on their porches for a block of time on Fridays. Coupons would be circulated for local businesses, which would encourage folks to order food to eat while they sat outside. Events like these bring us together and make us feel safer and more a part of inclusive communities.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## **Question 7**

**One of the first bills proposed in this upcoming State legislative session included returning local control of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department back to the state of Missouri. What is your stance on local control and pre-emptive attacks on local policy?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I believe that we need to retain local control of our law enforcement entities. Having to gain approval for implementation of new measures and efforts thru the state can only slow progress. Allowing outside entities which have viewpoints and agendas which reflect a subset of Missouri at large but not necessarily the best interests of the city in particular will restrict our ability to meet the city's needs effectively and efficiently.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## Question 8

**In what ways should the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department be more accountable to the residents of this city? How would you ensure that SLMPD achieves those standards of accountability?**

### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

Treating the recent selection of a new chief as an example of how citizen input is handled generally: There were purported avenues for community feedback but not a truly transparent process. To my knowledge, no information was given to city residents at large about the tenor of the feedback that was received, or if any effort was made to collect feedback from marginalized communities that may not have had the ability to attend the forum or the access to be able to submit feedback online. I don't know that there was information on how the feedback that was submitted was weighed in the balance of the overall decision making process along with input from other entities, such as the Police Union and the Ethical Society of Police.

More generally speaking - we need independent oversight that can wield power to make systemic change. The Civilian Oversight board is a great start, but reactionary and narrow in scope as far as its capabilities. I would look to implement some of the recommendations laid out by the Center for Policing Equity, such as having unarmed Community Service Officers to go on low-level 911 calls, ending the use of pretextual stops, and establishing a review process for body-worn cameras.

### **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## Question 9

**With the passage of BB 116, we will see the beginnings of a Universal Basic Income program for residents of the city. The current program outlines that you have to be a city resident, have a child(ren) under the age of 18 enrolled in the public school district, and not exceed 170% of the Federal Poverty Level. How do you feel about this Universal Basic Income? If you support UBI, how would you seek to expand this program to include those that don't fall under these current requirements? (I.E. Homeless, those city residents who chose to enroll students into city charter schools, etc.)**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I support UBI - it is shown to be a successful way of providing government assistance to those who most need it, without the barriers presented by some of the more traditional methods of providing aid. It is disappointing that the parameters of the current UBI criteria exclude some of those populations with the greatest need, i.e. the unhoused, especially at a time when the housing crisis is only worsening and more families are finding themselves in crisis in the wake of the pandemic.

Ideally, the city would build a network of wraparound services for the unhoused which could incorporate channeling these payments to those in need into their systems for providing other resources. (I will save that for the next question) I could see implementing a system to reach the unhoused population with assistance by having a specialized division of benefits navigator which connects the office responsible for dispensing the payments with organizations and entities who currently provide services to the unhoused. Social workers and outreach specialists could attest to the housing status of those seeking assistance, in lieu of proof of income, and assist those who do not have an ID in obtaining one at no cost.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

# **Question 10**

**What concrete steps will you take to alleviate homelessness in the City of St. Louis?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I would make the establishment and sustainable maintenance of city run 24 hour walk in shelters a priority. The current lack of infrastructure has forced private citizens to step up to save the lives of unhoused folks during the winter months and the peak summer heat. While these efforts are heroic, these responsibilities should be fulfilled through city departments. Having attended a recent forum on solving the problem of meeting the needs of our unhoused communities, it is my understanding that we need to prioritize funding the city's public health department, which plays a significant role in outreach.

The city also needs to take a serious look at facilitating providing resources and allowing outreach efforts in public spaces to address the effect of the opioid epidemic, as this issue intersects with handling the care of our unhoused neighbors. For example, I would love to be able to place harm reduction materials in Willmore Park in my ward - safe needle disposal, fentanyl test strips, narcan and printed materials on how to access resources.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 11**

**How do you plan to fund needed infrastructure improvements in the city, particularly in areas impacted by flooding?**

#### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

Rather than relying on ward capital to respond to flooding, I think it would be reasonable for the city to have funding allocated specifically for flooding response. We are only going to see more of this as climate change persists, and having an emergency response plan and funding to fulfill it is the responsible approach.

Flooding prevention and infrastructure also includes ensuring that developments in or near areas that are flood prone are not channeling more runoff into vulnerable areas. The city can guide where and how redevelopment occurs to effectively decrease flood losses. In addition, the city can require responsible building and reconstruction in flood zones so that homes and businesses can better withstand flooding.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 12**

**What are some of your biggest priorities for ARPA spending?**

#### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I have served for the last 2 years on the Citizens Advisory Committee for Capital Expenditures, listening to presentations from all of the cities departments and providing feedback on how to prioritize spending. At the conclusion of the presentations both years everyone on the committee fills out a survey where we are asked to rank by priority all of the projects that we were presented with. I'm in agreement with the priorities expressed by the committee. This year, the item that we all ranked as the highest priority was the Public Safety Answering Point Building - the facility which will house the new 911 dispatch center that the city so desperately needs. Other top 10 priorities included rec center maintenance, emergency management equipment (radios, fire alarm systems and warning sirens), ADA implementation, a new roof on the justice center, bridge repairs, and Soulard market renovations. Most are pressing infrastructure needs because their neglect could result directly in physical harm to people, and the Soulard market renovations represent essential upkeep of what is fairly universally considered a hallmark public good in STL for both locals and visitors.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 13**

**One of the greatest factors around increasing economic mobility in the region is through increasing public transit access. How do you plan to make public transit more accessible across the city?**

#### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

We have the opportunity to set the tone of the conversation about building public transit across municipalities in the St Louis area. Lack of access to transportation is one of the primary barriers to access to resources for low income city residents. More buses along routes with access to early education, job centers, and food retailers with fresh options and even an elevated train line or two would go a long way toward advancing equity. These would have to be built with disability access in mind and run by a workforce who are paid a living wage.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 14**

**Issues of environmental racism affect many families in St Louis. How do you plan to address issues such as lead poisoning, food apartheid, illegal dumping, and air quality that leads to higher rates of asthma?**

#### **Katie Bellis-Ward**

Protecting St. Louisans from environmental harm and racism begins with protecting their housing by requiring landlords to provide environments that are safe and affordable. We can further these protections by requiring more air filtration and lead and asbestos removal. As the For the Sake of All report recommends, I would support coordinating and expanding chronic and infectious disease prevention/management and investing in coordinated school health programs for all students.

There are other cities that have piloted wonderful food justice initiatives that we could certainly adopt in STL. While living in Philadelphia I volunteered for and then worked for an organization called The Food Trust. They offer nutrition education programs in schools and rec centers, advocate for placement of fresh fruits and vegetables for sale in corner stores in food deserts, and run farmers markets which accept food stamps and WIC, and offer coupons when those are spent on fruits and



vegetables. I would love for St. Louis to offer programs like these within and without my ward, in collaboration with entities like schools, libraries, rec centers, the Department of Public Health, local farmers, and local small businesses.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## **Question 15**

**How will you use your position on the Board of Alderman to increase access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care including but not limited to abortion care, pregnancy, and postpartum support?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I plan to lead by example in continuing to volunteer as a clinic escort and continue to tell my abortion story. I'll do anything in my power to beat back any further encroachment by the state on what reproductive rights we still have in MO and look to expand healthcare access in the areas that most need it. I will push for further allocation of resources to schools, rec centers, and libraries in low-income areas and for access to health services and accurate and inclusive health education for young people.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

## **Question 16**

**With more than 25% of renters in the city of St. Louis being rent-burdened, what is your plan to expand access to affordable housing and advocate for renter protections throughout the city?**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I have been excited to see tenants organizing and support Action STL's efforts to see a Tenant's Bill of Rights passed to protect St. Louisans from predatory landlords and illegal evictions. I would support expansion of the Housing Choice Voucher program and updates to the enrollment process to facilitate ease of continuous contact with those who have submitted the initial application. would also advocate for inclusionary zoning policies to ensure that housing projects include affordable housing, and rental registries to track rent prices, the number of landlords accepting I vouchers, and the capacity of landlords to house those with disability needs. I also support the right to counsel for those who are facing eviction, as put forth in current Board Bill 180.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 17**

**Do you support the demand for a citywide reparations process? Please explain your position.**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I will look to the recommendations of the Reparations Commission recently formed by Mayor Jones for a method in charting a course to move toward this important step in racial equity.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 18**

**What is your position on privatization as it relates to city assets? Please explain your position.**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

Data on privatization shows the same things overall: financial losses for the City and less accountability. There is no reason to turn over public goods that are functioning well or the city is capable of enacting improvements to, to private interests.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.

### **Question 19**

**What is your position on city/county reunification? Please explain your position.**

## **Katie Bellis-Ward**

I don't know that there has been recent enough, unbiased research on how to manage such a transition in a way that would not further disempower black St. Louisans. I think that the conversation starts with unification of resources - the city and county libraries recently successfully merged their collections, for example. And I am in favor of the continuation of collaborations like the one between the city and the county on matters of Public Health.

## **Phill Menendez and Tom Oldenburg**

Did not respond.