



2023

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

VOTER GUIDE

WARD 5

MARCH 7TH, APRIL 4TH ELECTION DAY



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

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.**



Legend

- WARD 5 2021
- WARD 5 2011
- NEIGHBORHOODS
- BLOCKS
- PARCELS
- BUILDING FOOTPRINTS
- PARKS

WARD 5

Adopted on 12/27/2021

City of St. Louis - Planning & Urban Design Agency

CITY OF ST. LOUIS
PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN AGENCY

1000 N. GRAND BLVD., SUITE 1000
 ST. LOUIS, MO 63102
 (314) 488-1000

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

Schlafly 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 5 Candidates



Joe Vollmer



Helen Petty

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.

Helen Petty

I believe the residents of the 5th ward deserve an Alderperson who is accessible and will be accountable to them no matter where in the ward they live. I am committed to answering calls, texts, and emails to address my constituents' concerns no matter how small. I know how to compromise without compromising my values. Growing up in poverty and navigating the foster care system, I was often overlooked, and I learned from a very early age how to successfully advocate for myself. Those skills directly translate to advocating for my constituents, especially those who have been underserved, and for our city as a whole. Having run my own business for the past 7 years, I have the leadership skills to work with people of all different backgrounds to advance the common good and to problem solve on the fly. Above all I love St. Louis and want to see our city thrive, and that means making sure every resident in the 5th ward is getting the support they deserve.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 2

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

Helen Petty

I see the role of Alderperson as two equally important parts. First is constituent services. This means addressing the everyday concerns of residents such as trash pick-up, potholes, speed humps, tree planting, etc. by connecting them with the appropriate city departments and escalating concerns that haven't been addressed in a timely fashion.

Second is policy and budget. Alderpeople are responsible for crafting policy and allocating funds that supports the health of our residents, infrastructure, and city services. It is my belief that although we are 14 separate wards, we must elect Alderpeople who can address these concerns together, for our city as whole, in an equitable way.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

Meeting people where they're at is imperative to involving the larger community in legislative decisions that affect their lives. This can look like many things. Monthly newsletters that detail in plain language proposed bills. Public testimony hearings for board bills that are not during traditional work hours. Allowing a zoom viewing option for every meeting, including special committees, and not just full board meetings. Requiring Alderpeople to attend community association meetings. Having Alderpeople hold regular town hall style meetings in their communities. Lastly, city wide education campaigns to let people know when, where, and how to access information. These infographics could be on bus stops, at our public libraries, and in local publications as well as on various social media platforms.

Joe Vollmer

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)?

Helen Petty

The abuse of the blight designation and tax abatement system in St. Louis is well documented and ongoing. TIF subsidies as they are currently deployed exacerbate the racial and economic divide. Moving forward we need a city wide development plan that prioritizes underserved and underinvested areas of our city. We have the data to see where abatement money has already gone, where development is happening, and where population is growing or declining. We need to limit the use of these incentives in strong market areas, unless it is to support affordable housing, with an actual board bill. Additionally, we need strict development policies that require inclusionary zoning for any city subsidized development in the aforementioned strong market areas.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 5

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

Helen Petty

This question is connected in part to the question about TIFs above. Reigning in the abuse of a blight designation and tax abatements will assist in the appropriate funding of our public schools. Additionally, instituting a moratorium on Charter School expansion will stop the diversion of students and funding away from our public schools. Lastly, we should work with state legislators when possible to stop the purposeful defunding of our schools with the “school choice” push.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

The data is clear that relying on police or demanding more police presence is not effective in reducing intra community violence and making us safer. In the broad sense we need to address issues such as institutional and systemic racism and poverty that are the root causes of crime and violence. This looks like dedicating resources to underfunded and underserved communities for quality healthcare including mental health services, access to living wage jobs, and funded and functional schools, among other things. Additionally there are community based crime prevention programs that focus on building inter community relationships and communal trauma healing that need to be funded and implemented in our most vulnerable and in-need communities.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

I do not believe that State lawmakers, who do not hold seats that represent the City of St. Louis, should be proposing bills that determine who controls our police department. Matters of crime reduction, policing, and many other issues should be decided by the residents of the City who understand our unique challenges and who live them every day.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

A Police Review Commission that holds monthly meetings that are open to the public where community members and organizations can voice criticism and make suggestions on resolutions to review and reform specific police policies is a great way to involve all parties- residents, electeds, and the police- in police accountability. Body cameras on every officer that are actually turned on have not been proven to change the behavior of police officers, but they do provide evidence to hold police officers accountable after the fact. We need to work within our capacity as legislators and with the police department to pass policies that reform the arrest and incarcerate model which has been proven to be ineffective in reducing crime and in fact penalizes low income people and contributes to the cycle of poverty. Nearly 60% of arrests made in St. Louis are for low level nonviolent offenses. By reducing the public interaction with armed traditional police officers, we can reduce the potential of police violence.

Joe Vollmer

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.)

Helen Petty

I support the UBI program and know personally what a difference a small, consistent amount of help can provide when you are living in poverty. The program as it stands is a good starting point. To expand the program to our unhoused neighbors, we need to think outside the box. Working with a local shelter as a central place for participants in the program who are unhoused is one idea. Partnering with outreach workers who already have relationships with folks who are not comfortable going to a shelter to help them access the funds is another. While I do not support the expansion of Charter Schools in our city as a general matter of policy, I do not believe we should penalize any parent for making the best choice for their child with the options at hand and I support expanding the program to include families with students enrolled in charter schools.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 10

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

Helen Petty

We need to have a city funded, no barrier, 24 hour walk in shelter and dedicated outreach workers. We need to repeal ordinances that criminalize homelessness or those who are doing outreach. Additionally, study after study has shown that not only is providing housing for unhoused folks the morally right thing to do, it is also the fiscally responsible thing to do as a city. There is no one size fits all solution, but we know that the solution to homelessness is housing and programs such as Rapid Rehousing work. We also know that strategies such as clearing encampments and throwing away people's belongings destroys their communities, disrupts services to already vulnerable people who can then not be located by outreach workers,

and also reinforces the idea that people who are unhoused are not worthy of basic respect and dignity. Lastly, we need to help those on the verge of homelessness with direct rental/mortgage assistance that is easily accessible and available.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 11

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

Helen Petty

We need to restructure the ward capital funds to be equitable as opposed to equal. Additionally we need to pass budgets in a timely fashion and actually hold elected officials who hold up streets and other projects accountable when they do not do their job in moving projects forward. The truth of the matter is many projects are funded, they are just not getting done because of personal grudges, understaffing-which can be addressed with competitive pay and benefits packages-, and bureaucracy.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 12

What are some of your biggest priorities for ARPA spending?

Helen Petty

Housing, public transportation and street safety, economic equity programs, affordable and accessible early childhood education and childcare programming.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

We need to bring public transportation up to speed in St. Louis and make it more accessible and functional for more people. Bus Rapid Transit lanes need to be installed on our busiest corridors. These lanes will also improve street safety. The Metrolink was a great start in terms of light rail transit, but it is long overdue for expansion with connecting lines that extend north and south and a system of payment that ensures fare is being collected. Transit vouchers for low income and unhoused residents need to be easily obtainable so public transit access is not limited. Lastly, accessibility of sidewalks needs to be a citywide endeavor instead of piecemeal ward by ward.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

An important part of addressing environmental racism is engaging directly with the communities most affected and amplifying and supporting the issues around environmental racism that they have identified in their community. In addition, elected officials need to use the tools they have at hand- specifically permitting, land use plans, and zoning- to stop the perpetuation of these issues in our communities.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

One of the simplest things any elected official can do is not be afraid to state their position firmly and more specifically to not shy away from using the word abortion. Examples such as the recently passed reproductive equity fund are a great example of ways the local government can affect positive change in a State that has outlawed abortion. While abstinence education is required in Missouri, local education agencies have the authority to additionally provide comprehensive sex education as long as parents are given an opt out option. For pregnancy and postpartum care, funding, supporting, and expanding the work of places such as Jamaa Birth Center who are already doing the work to support pregnant people, specifically Black and brown pregnant people who have some of the worst maternal mortality rates, is crucial. A city wide postpartum doula and lactation consultant program for low income parents is something I would work to see implemented.

Joe Vollmer

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?

Helen Petty

This partially ties back into the question about TIFs and tax abatements. Increasing the amount of affordable housing in St. Louis can be addressed by prioritizing affordable housing developments. We also need a renters bill of rights that will legally enshrine protections for renters and hold landlords accountable for making repairs, and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. We can also increase ownership by assisting with the renovation of and reducing barriers for people who want to owner occupy currently vacant and city owned buildings

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 17

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

Helen Petty

Yes. Hundreds of years of chattel slavery, policies and practices such as segregation, redlining, unequal pay and education opportunities, many of which continue to this day and lead to the ongoing racial wealth gap, need to be addressed in concrete ways, including a reparations process.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 18

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

Helen Petty

I do not support privatization of public assets. Private companies have a vested interest in their bottom line and their shareholders and not protecting the public good or our city.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.

Question 19

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

Helen Petty

Theoretically I support a city/county reunification. It has largely been successful in similarly positioned cities, would improve the fiscal health of our region, and has the potential to reduce residents' criminal justice system interactions if done correctly. However, it must be done in a way that does not dilute Black political representation or disenfranchise Black residents and voters. Lastly, it needs to be decided by the residents of St. Louis City and County only and not be put to a statewide vote.

Joe Vollmer

Did not respond.