

**Alicia Gibson - Ward 10**



## **2021 City Candidate Questionnaire**

*Thank you for filling out our 2021 City Candidate Questionnaire. As a 501(C)3 organization, Community Power will not be making endorsements. The purpose of this questionnaire is to educate Minneapolis residents on the positions of those seeking City offices that will shape the future of energy related to access, equity, resilience, decision-making/ownership and affordability.*

### **Section 1: Meeting Minneapolis' Renewable Energy & Climate Goals**

1. Share how climate change has affected communities you are/were a part of and how that influences your understanding of the problem:

Here in Minneapolis, climate change has demonstrably increased the number of heavy rainfall events (>1" / hr), which has serious negative impacts on one of our most iconic and vital resources: our lakes. Heavy rainfall events result in an increase in rainwater runoff feeding into our lakes, taking all kinds of environmental pollutants with it and causing algae blooms. This in turn impacts not only the ability for people to enjoy the lakes with swimming during the summer, it has devastating impacts on the aquatic ecosystem, and all the other interconnected living systems. Moreover the rising temperatures of the water itself pose critical problems for the aquatic ecosystem.

2. What do you intend to do during your time in office to help Minneapolis meet its adopted policy goals of 100% renewable electricity by 2030 for all Minneapolis energy users, and 100% renewable energy in all sectors (electricity, heating, transportation, industry) by 2050 for all Minneapolis energy users?<sup>1</sup>

There are three areas where we can align our policies with the federal government's plans to jumpstart a green economy: 1) convert our city transportation fleets to electric models and build in electric vehicle charging and parking, 2) support the growth of our solar, wind, and other renewable power network, and 3) continue expanding our ability to assess insulation levels and services to help improve thermal efficiency. In many ways, Minneapolis is at the point where there are so many resources and opportunities that the average person experiences information and choice overload. In order to overcome this along with equity barriers, I am calling for a citizen-driven Climate Corps as part of a new NRP through neighborhood associations for door-to-door outreach with homeowners, renters, businesses, and property owners. This would be modeled after highly successful census campaigns as well as the WWII home front mobilization--this time to mobilize our populace to adopt planet-sustaining habits and lifestyles.

What will you do in your time in office to achieve greater racial, economic, and gender diversity in the "green" workforce and accessibility to green job training as well as the racial, economic, and gender diversity of the ownership of small green businesses?

<sup>1</sup> The City has a third shorter term goal of 100% renewable electricity for city operations by 2023

One key way that we can increase diversity in the “green” workspace and job training sectors is to ensure that trusted community organizations are approached as partners when making opportunities known. Too often, equality means treating everyone the same. This sounds good but it actually reinforces the status quo. EQUITY means working to understand the nuances of diverse communities -- where and how they get information, who their trusted grassroots leaders are, and what is relevant to their specific lived experiences. It also means partnering with educators to make sure there are proactive initiatives in place that target girls and BIPOC students from a young age, because data shows us receive biased messages at very young ages that science fields are not for people who look like them.

3. **There are growing examples of district heating systems that use existing water pipe systems both nationally and locally (e.g. the Towerside Development on the East Bank; District Heating in Minneapolis’ downtown; the EcoDistrict of St. Paul).** What role do you see or would you like to see the district heating and our municipal water utility playing, if any, in a strategy towards ending our reliance on fossil fuels for heating and cooling?

The adoption of district heating systems is an exciting development and an example of how green technologies are increasing at an exponential rate in their ability to help us meet the challenges of climate change. Heat pump technology for homes is right on that cusp of being an obvious alternative in our cold climate, but similar technology on the large-scale and combined with geothermal for new projects is already at the point of making sense for widespread adoption and will help make significant gains in reaching our goals. I would support any number of incentives for adoption of these projects, including property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing.

## Section 2: Access to Energy Efficiency

4. **Minneapolis has an adopted policy goal of 75% of Minneapolis households’ participating in efficiency retrofits by 2025.** What ideas do you have to advance equitable access to energy efficiency and how will those support the participation of those who bear a higher energy cost burden or face access barriers to existing programs (e.g. renters, low & moderate income, and BIPOC<sup>2</sup> residents) to ensure that all Minneapolis residents have healthy homes, affordable energy bills, and the choice to shift to clean, efficient energy? Describe the particular policies/initiatives you would expand, continue, and/or create.

In order to meet the demands of rapid implementation of energy efficiency standards, and do so in a way that meets the demands of equity I would like to launch a Climate Corps as described in the response to question #2. Climate Corps members could be trained by organizations like the Community Utility Board and specialize in various sectors. Especially if we are to address the needs of our communities of color and low-income residents, who cash-strapped and time-burdened, we have to adopt the model of our highly successful census outreach and tackle the problem of climate change with the urgency it demands. Inclusive financing would be a logical part of this push. I would also pursue requirements on new developments to substantially include renewable energy as part of their site plans and would offer tax incentives for current apartment buildings that are time-sensitive and emphasize switching to renewables and making other improvements sooner rather than later.

5. What community engagement efforts would you advocate for the City to use/create/implement to make sure communities know about and have agency in energy efficiency programs that work for them,

<sup>2</sup>BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

including the likely pilot of Inclusive Financing in Minneapolis? **Inclusive Financing is a nationally well-tested energy efficiency tool that the City, as part of the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership, has been pursuing for the past two years to address critical gaps in existing efficiency programs.**

My campaign is calling for citywide community engagement through the funding of a Climate Corps at the neighborhood level that would provide stipends to community members as they become fully invested and educated participants in the solution to climate change. Inclusive financing would be included in this push as a way to make all available opportunities accessible. PACE financing would support the needed transitions at the industrial and larger scale, while inclusive financing would be available for residential and smaller-scale independent businesses.

### Section 3: Funding the City's Climate and Energy Equity Priorities

6. In 2017, the City of Minneapolis increased the utility franchise fee by 0.5% to create resources for the specific purpose of funding local energy solutions that would *equitably lower utility bills (see footnote for details)*.<sup>3</sup> What do you think about the level of franchise fee funding (approximately \$2.5 million per year) that exists now: (*select all that apply!*)

a. It is more than is needed to meet the city's climate and energy goals and should be reduced to \$\_\_\_\_\_/year so that the funding can go to the following project area:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_ b. It is about the right amount

c. It is not enough to meet the city's climate and energy goals, but I'm not sure how much to raise it by

d. It is not enough to meet the city's climate and energy goals and I believe ~\$\_\_\_\_\_/year is needed at least

e. Funding to accomplish the same energy and climate equity goals could/ should come from this source in addition and/or instead of the franchise fee:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_ f. I believe there are other sources of climate funding already being leveraged by the city that have been overlooked in this question, including:

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Where do you think these funds should reside? (*Select all you believe would be ideal*)

a. Dedicated/ear-marked fund in City's budget

b. Green Bank

c. General Fund ← (*where funds currently reside*)

d. Other: I would also be interested in creating a city bank where funds for green improvements as well as for housing equity programs like land-banking and reparations could also collect interest.

### Section 4: Evaluating the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership's Effectiveness

8. Before the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership<sup>4</sup> was created, the city was discussing a potential municipalization of the gas and electric utilities as a way to reach its climate action

<sup>3</sup> See official news release from the City on the Franchise Fee increase: <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/news/WCMSP-207153>

<sup>4</sup> See PDF copy of the 2019-2021 Work Plan here: <https://mplscleanenergypartnership.org/about/2017-2018-workplan/>

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**plan and equity goals.** What criteria or thresholds would convince you that the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership is on track to succeed (e.g. reaching climate and equity goals on time)? Under what circumstances, if any, would you view the option to municipalize as part of the pathway needed to reach the City's climate action and equity goals?

As a collection of lawmakers, the mayor's office, utility leadership, and a citizen advisory board the Minneapolis Clean Energy Coalition is a public-private partnership that models the kind of partnerships we need at all levels if we are to meet the challenge of climate change in our city, state, and country. The franchise fee the utilities pay is substantial and makes equity possible when offering green opportunities to residents and businesses, and I'd like to see inclusive financing and funding for a Climate Corps added to this list. With that said, more transparency around the use of the franchise fee is needed and the reality is that municipal conversion is an important element of leverage to ensure this partnership meets its promise. In determining whether it is a partnership that should continue I would analyze the full costs of municipalization and how quickly we could create similar funding opportunities to replace the franchise fee, as well as hear from members of the Energy Vision Advisory Board and other environmental policy community leaders.

