

Interview with Jolon Clark, Denver City Council President and District 7 Representative

Interview conducted at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 18, 2018 at the home of Ian Melchior.

***Ian Melchior:** In talking to some other elected officials, it seems like often times there was some specific issue or something that made them want to get involved in politics. So when you first decided to run for City Council, was there anything that was more important to you, that got you into it?*

Representative Jolon Clark: I wouldn't say there was one specific issue. I, this was not part of my master plan. I'd been working for the same non-profit, the Greenway Foundation, since I was 17 years old, and in summers when I was in high school, summers when I was in college, took a full time job running the education program right out of college. And you know, I was set to keep working there and take over for the guy whose dad founded that non-profit, and this was kind of a curveball for me. In 2011 I moved into District 7. I grew up in what is now District 6. My parents bought a house four blocks east of Wash Park in 1969 for \$10,000, and they'll be celebrating 50 years living there this coming year.

And so I moved into [District] 7 in 2011. I had been working in the community for my whole life, all the kids I was taking on field trips were from those schools, you know, I was officing down on the South Platte River here in Athmar Park, at Johnson Habitat Park before we remodeled it, I've been going to Overland Neighborhood Association Meetings talking about how we revitalize the river through here with the Shattuck money¹. But I lived right there in 2011, so I reached out to then-councilman Chris Nevitt, my predecessor, and just said "Hey, I live here now, I've been super involved, can I get involved?" And I specifically asked him if his spot on the Parks and Rec Advisory Board - each Councilperson appoints somebody to that board - cause I'm a parks guy, if that ever became available that I'd love to do that. I joined my neighborhood association at the first farmers' market right after I moved in, and then as soon as my kids started going to school at McKinley-Thatcher I joined the PTA.

And so within a few months, Chris Nevitt's appointee stepped down, and I was then representing the district on the parks board, within, I think, a year and a half I was president of the PTA at the kids school, and I was super involved in my RNO, and I was doing those things because I just love Denver, and I love community, and I love the local, the super-local stuff like the PTA and the neighborhood meetings, and so when Chris Nevitt decided not to run for a 3rd term, I had a whole host of people who asked me to run.

And that was honestly the first time I had ever thought, I thought I was on a trajectory where I was going to retire at the greenway foundation, and it was the first time I had ever thought about anything else. I said no to a few people first, but when people kept asking, I said "Alright I'll look into it, I'll talk to my family about it." When I got in the race there was only 1 other person running, and I decided, "You know what, when you have an opportunity to do something that people are asking you to do, and I love this city, if I can be of service, then I'll take a shot at it." And within a month there were 9 people running, and I almost dropped out, I thought "What am I doing?", but I stuck with it and gave it my all, and here I am.

¹ This appears to be a reference to superfund money, and money that came through a settlement with the EPA and with Denver having to do with radioactive contamination at the Shattuck chemical plant in Denver.

That's actually a good - it leads into my next question. I was doing a little background research and it looks like when you first ran in 2015, there were at least nine people -

There were nine, counting me. Eight opponents, nine of us total.

So, my question is, obviously there's a lot of different factors that go into that, but what do you think are the most important factors that ended up putting you ahead and making you win in such a crowded field?

I think there were a lot of really great people in that race. You know, I made a joke, I think at one of our debates, before we started it, that wouldn't it be cool if the nine of us could go be the new city council? Because it was such a great group of people, and people who I'm still very close friends with to this day, made a lot of great relationships in that.

I think at the end of the day, what resonated with people with me is my history in the community, and I think honestly my motivation for running. I think when it comes to it, too many people jump into a city council race when really they'd rather be up at the state level, or the federal level, or someday they want to be the governor, or be on you know this, and they're trying to get into politics, and I think that people appreciated that that wasn't me. I'm not a political science major, I'm a natural resource major, and this was not kind of what I had set out to do or be, but that I loved this city, and I had grown up here, and I have parents who were retired, trying to make ends meet in the city, and I have my kids in the school district, and I was in the PTA, and I was active in my neighborhood association, I think really resonated with people in terms of just who I was and why I was running, more than any specific issue.

Because even with nine of us in the race, on a lot of the issues, most of us agreed. It wasn't like this race where you have somebody who's like "no, tear everything down" and somebody who's "let's build everything up." For the most part, we were pretty aligned. I'd get to some doors and they'd be like "I can't keep track of which one of you is which, because you all seem to agree on everything," which is part of why it was so fun to get to know everybody. But I think what it came down to is just motivation, people saw that this wasn't something that I was then wanting to go be the president of the U.S. someday, it was more that I really wanted to serve this community, and that I had deep roots here, and that I really cared, and that I was here to stay.

So...

You should ask some voters why they voted for me.

Ha! So you've been on city council about three or four years now...

Three and a half. It's a four year term, so end of July is the end of my first term. The election's in May.

So you've got some experience under your belt, what's the hardest part about your job on City Council?

Ooh - definitely the hardest part is, especially in this political climate, is that there are a lot of people who yell and scream first, and then, you know, we get down to "hey, let's sit down and talk about this" second. And that can be really emotionally draining, especially with social media, and just so many people are angry about what's happening politically in our country on a national level, sometimes at the state level, and I'm the, I'm your, you know, smallest, I represent the smallest number of people of any elected position, I'll meet you for coffee, you know I'm out in the district all the time, and you can call up and actually catch me, and talk to me on the phone, or in person, or I'll come to your house!

Yeah.

I think sometimes I get the brunt of all of that, and that's hard sometimes, you know. I mean, you gotta have a pretty thick skin, but no matter how thick your skin is, it never feels good to be yelled at, especially if it's something you didn't have anything to do with, or you didn't have any control over. You get people all the time yelling at me about things that I don't have any power over. People don't understand what the charter, which is the people's document, has granted me authority over. And so they just yell at me about everything. There was one time I was at the ice cream shop with my kids, and somebody decided that was an appropriate place to just start yelling at me, and my kids are crying, they don't want ice cream anymore, they run out of the store. You know, that kind of impact on my family, who - they definitely said "hey, we're all in," and they knocked doors with me and everything, but when it comes home to roost with that, that's by far the hardest part of the deal.

You mentioned that sometimes people ask you to do things that are outside of your charter, your control on city council. What are some of the common things that people ask you about that really aren't the role of the City Council?

Well so, that falls in a couple different buckets. There are things that are city things, but we don't have control over, the mayor's office does. Separation of powers and the branches... and then there are things that we don't have authority over because we're pre-empted at the state or the federal level. You know, I get a lot of people who want us to look at doing public bank, or rent control, banning plastic bags or straws like Seattle did, and/or get the scooters off the sidewalk and put them in the street, in the bike lane - all of those issues that I just brought up were preempted at the state, which means that we don't have the legal authority to even talk about those things, or pass a law on those things, because there's already a state law that says we can't.

So, single-use plastic, for instance, we want to ban plastic bags or ban plastic straws like Seattle did. There's a law from 1979 on the books at the state that specifically says that no municipality can ban any kind of plastic for any reason. So we can't have that discussion, And so people will call and say "hey! Just saw that Seattle did this! Seattle's a city, Denver's a city, why aren't you guys talking about this? I don't hear anyone talking about it!" It's because we can talk about it, and I think we could probably get quite a few votes on something like that. It doesn't matter, because we can't legally do it.

So there's that bucket, and then there's, you know, probably the bulk of the things people reach out to me on, where they say "Hey! I want a speed bump, or a stop sign. I want a wider sidewalk." You know, those things that I don't have - I'm the legislative branch of government, and so, very few people call me and say - some people in Athmar Park have called and they say "Hey! I don't think our leash law is appropriate, and out tethering law for dogs, is appropriate, and people are leaving their dogs out 24 hours a day, and that's not ok." And I can actually dig into changing that law. I can change the laws in the city, but I cannot *legislate* where a stop sign goes, or where a 2-way stop sign becomes a 4-way stop sign. Or that we use speed bumps. Those are all things that fall under the executive branch, under the mayor, and those are the bulk of the things that people call my office looking for.

Because again, they call 311, they get the runaround, they don't get to somebody, or they do get to somebody who tells them no, and it's someone who's three levels down, four levels, five levels down from the mayor. They don't have authority over that person, but they get to vote for me, and so they call me up and say "Hey! I voted for you and why aren't you doing this thing?" It's something that, I can connect them to the right people,

but I can't legislate it. The charter specifically says that if I direct anyone who reports to the mayor, who is basically every city employee, then I'm violating the charter.

If you tell them what to do?

Yeah, if I give them direction. If I ask them "Hey, could you look at this, could we do a study, could we get a stop sign here?" I can ask, and that's what I do. I spend most of my time advocating on behalf of my constituents to the mayor's team, to say "Hey, I really think we should have a 4-way stop sign here. Can you look at it?" But at the end of the day, if they say no, I don't get to say "No, you know what, I'm the elected. Yes!" Because they don't report to me, they report to the mayor per the charter.

Got it. Are there any - so we talked about some areas where you don't have power. Are there any specific areas where you wish that City Council was able to do things? And I'm not talking about, you know, branching out into the executive branch, but things like you mentioned that are shut down from the state level, or just other things that, for whatever reason, that you don't have control over, that you wish you did.

Well, I mean, I think that when you get into this job, your first wish is that you had all the power, right? Cause I'm like, "Hey! Let's get things done!" I would love to have the opportunity to go around and try and convince six of my colleagues to vote for something. But I think all of those areas, and I do, I work with our state representatives and our state senators, to say "hey, could you guys - would you be willing to sponsor a bill to - you don't even have to *do it...*", we don't need them to ban plastic bags statewide, if that was too heavy of a lift. They just need to repeal the law that says *we can't*. So marijuana, for instance, they said, "hey, you don't have to legalize marijuana in your city. If you want to do it, you can." That's why some cities have no marijuana in them and some do. It was - they gave us local control. And so it's just in those - in any area, even if it's something that I don't want to happen, I would still advocate for local control, because I believe that what is right, and fits, and what makes sense in Denver is very different from what is right and what fits in Sterling, Colorado. And so I believe cities should have wide authority over the rules inside their city. If Denver were to pass something like that, it wouldn't apply in Lakewood, it wouldn't apply in Boulder, it wouldn't apply in Sterling, or Ault, right? But if it's right for us, and what our citizens are wanting, then we should have that authority on the city council to do that. We shouldn't be preempted at the state level. So, I think that is something that I always wish. And similarly, we have strong-mayor-government, and it's all the same issues - he has all the power. So, any and all of those, I would love to have more authority on, to push for.

And then the flip-side of that: Are there any areas where you think City Council might have too much power?

No, in a strong-mayor government, there's definitely nowhere that the City Council has too much power. I mean, we have legislative authority, and we have some check powers, so, you know, most of what we vote on on a given Monday night, 50 things or 30 things or whatever, are contracts, and that is a check power, it's not a real power. So if we're writing legislation, we're writing the bill to make it illegal for you to declaw your cat in the city - which we did - we can amend that, we can debate every little inch of it. "Well, what about this situation?" and "What are the fines?" and all that stuff, we can legislate, we have full control because that's a legislative power. That's our "lane" from the charter. On contracts, that was a power that was added way later, because past mayors were giving all the contracts to their buddies and to their family members, there was a lot of corruption happening, and so the city council put to the voters, "Hey, you should give us a check power to make sure that this stuff doesn't happen." Now, that requires the mayor to run any contract over half a million dollars through city council. We can't amend it, it's already signed by every party before it gets to us -

It's just a veto power?

Right, it's a veto - it's really only a veto power - you might say, "hey, I don't like this, I don't think we should be doing this, this isn't somewhere we should be spending our money," but what it really is - is there corruption happening here? Did the mayor give this to his brother? Or, was he paid off and that's the person who won the contract? So, almost never, I'm not sure EVER since that law was passed has a contract been turned back. Because it's just a check power, and by the mayor knowing it's going to come in front of city council, it cut all that out, because everybody's like "oh, now that someone's watching, we won't do that anymore." So, we serve that purpose, but it, you know, that's something that, we don't have much power - there's really nowhere that I think that city council has too much power or authority, because we have so little.

Got it. So in your first term of city council, what's the accomplishment you're most proud of?

Ooh....

Or if that's a tough question, give me like, your top three.

That's a tough one. Again, because a lot of things I've worked on... hmm.. Boy, that is a tough one. I would say... two things that jump up are, when I was first elected, I worked with all the Parks folks from the 3rd sector, from my non-profit job, so they knew me, and knew that I was a CSU natural resource nerd, and so a city forester reached out to me right away and said, as soon as you're in office, I want you to come on a trip to the midwest with my forestry team, because I have to show you what's happening with the Emerald Ash Bore (EAB). And so I got to go out, there were like 7 of us stuffed in a car, driving around Milwaukee, and Chicago, and Madison, looking at the impact of this pest on trees. And it was eye-opening. I had heard of EAB, I was familiar with EAB, which was further along than most people were at that time, but seeing firsthand, you know, a whole street where they would show you the picture, and there were these giant trees and these tire swings in people's yards, and not a single tree on the street. It was eye-opening, and I think that at the time, the city forester was trying to run around and ring the bell and say "this is a really big deal, and it's going to kill 1 in 5 trees in Denver." Imagine if you cut down one out, if you just walked down the block and went, one-two-three-four-chop, one-two-three-four-chop. Everywhere in the city. It's a huge impact, for our city, for our quality of live, the feel of our neighborhoods. He was trying to sound the bell, and just wasn't getting any traction, because most people were like "yeah, yeah, yeah, there's some bug coming, but it's not here yet..." So I was able to come back and this was like, in the first couple months I was in office, where I'm, you know, how do I make an impact in this strong-mayor city. And I lobbied my colleagues in our budget meeting, and I went through the slide deck, and I said "this is a huge problem that no one is paying attention to. We have to get ahead of this. The one thing that every single community said was 'start treating now, because it's probably already there, you don't find it til you're five years in, then it's too late, and there are literally trees falling on people's houses, there are safety issues, and you won't have the resources to deal with it.'" So I was able to fight ot have 3 million dollars put in the budget to proactively deal with that, and now Denver is seen as the leading city on being proactive for Emerald Ash Bore. And we have other cities, including all the way from Canada, coming to Denver to do the same tour I was doing in the midwest, except for to meet with us and say "hey, what are you doing and how are you so prepared for this?" Because we're better prepared than any city has ever been. So, I think that, and then, you know, earlier this year I worked with community members and advocated on their behalf to get the rainbow crosswalk put in - I don't know if you heard about that, on Broadway?

Yeah.

So I'm proud of that, because one, it helps with our Vision Zero goals, which are so important. It helps with pedestrian space in a corridor that has, since its beginning, been a commuter corridor to get people in and out of the city, but also because it was a physical statement about how inclusive our city is, and how much we care about our LGBTQ community, and so that one was also a highlight.

And then, what's been the most disappointing outcome, like an initiative that you supported that failed, or an initiative that you opposed that passed, something you wish would have gone differently.

Hmmm... trying to think on that one. I think - this one's a little wonky - we had a big debate on these small lots, and how much parking they're required to have. And there are a couple developers who found this loophole where they could build - this one guy bought two 6,250 square foot lots, so, I mean, the size of this lot you have right here probably. And he had two of them side-by-side that were zoned differently than this one is, but same size lot. And he was able to build - put in permits to build, I think they're still building them right now - 104 units on those two lots. So you and your neighbor's house, 104 units, zero parking spots. And we're in this push and pull, as we go from a cowtown that has dreams of being a big city, to a big city that has dreams about when we were a cowtown, and there's this push and pull between - how does parking fit into that? And you can't build your way, you can't just build wider and wider roads. That's what L.A. did, and they're still the worst-congested city in the nation. You have to find other ways. And I'm a mobility guy. I ride my bike to work almost every day, and I'm a huge advocate for bike lanes and pedestrian space. But in this instance, I just felt like it was not what - that piece was intended to preserve historic, small, commercial property on Colfax, and Broadway, and Pearl Street, and it was being abused to the maximum extreme. And so I fought really hard, and I was able to - it's funny, because my bill passed, I got the votes to pass my bill.

That bill being...?

What's that?

What was that bill?

The bill was to increase slightly the parking requirements on these small lots, from zero to something. But it was such a small increase, it felt like the conversation totally fell flat. So while I got the bill passed, I had to compromise so much to get something that would pass, that it didn't do a whole lot. And, at the same time, it was just a weird place to be fighting for bike lanes and pedestrians, but also fighting for more parking. Which was the right thing to do, but it had all the people who are usually cheering me on saying "Boo! You're the parking guy!" So it was just frustrating all around, because it didn't, in the end, I don't think we did enough compared to what we should have, and I got beat up by the folks who usually I'm advocating for, for doing anything.

That's a good transition into this next question. On your website, it lists your focuses on transportation and mobility, housing and homelessness, sustainability and the environment, and public safety. So out of those areas, or any area you want to talk about, are there any really wild, crazy, creative solutions, either that's been tried elsewhere, or that has not been, that if you just had dictatorial powers for a day, you'd try something really off-the-wall?

Oh boy... really off-the-wall... boy... I think, you know I've been very lucky to be able to visit a lot of cities that have just amazing bike infrastructure. Like all the ring cities in the Netherlands, and even Barcelona, who in the last five years, Barcelona and... there's another city I went to in Spain... just in the last five years have built a bike network, essentially overnight. And seeing how much you can shift that mode into bikes, and not by

forcing people, and not by making it worse for cars, but by making it really safe and usable for bikes. And so I do think that as we grow, and transportation becomes such a mess, and I mean, having grown up here, learned to drive here when I was 16 years old, the same drive that I made 100 times, it used to take 10 minutes, now it takes 45 minutes. And, having been a more recent adopter of biking myself to work, because in this job I have consistent places that I go, and seeing just how awesome that is, and now I've converted to an E-bike, and seeing how that can make biking accessible to a whole bunch of people who don't think biking is accessible to them, I think, you know, there are some really kind of off-the-wall things that would seem crazy at first, that if I was dictator-in-chief, I would try to plop a complete bike network down, that connects all of our communities, coupled with, you know, now we are starting to see an e-bike share come to denver. So with real options that would make biking accessible for so many more people, that we could kind of be the premier bike city in america if we wanted to. There's some growing pains with that, and there are certainly some people who have yelled at me, you get it on both sides. You get yelled at this way for fighting for a few parking spots where it was never intended to be zero, and then you get yelled at because we added the Broadway bike lane and there are people who are not a fan of that lane, but I think if I was dictator-in-chief, one of the things I would do that would seem a little off-the-wall is I would very quickly build out a complete bike network so that people had the choice. It shouldn't be something where you're like, "I don't live where there is safe bike infrastructure, it's too risky to take my life into my hands to ride down Alameda to cross." That every person really, truly had the choice of mobility for bikes, because I do think a lot of people would choose it. And people get it into their mind that "oh, you're trying to kick everybody out of cars." No! Even in Amsterdam, they have like 50 or 60 percent of people using bikes - that's still 30 or 40 percent of people in cars. There are a lot of people who will never get out of a car, can't get out of a car, their job requires them to lug things around. I think, this isn't about getting everyone, but it's about getting enough people that you'd actually, as a motorist, think "hey, it's not so bad driving because there aren't so many people."

There was an old marketing campaign that I loved, when I was a natural resource nerd, which I still am, but it was like "Hug an Angler." And they'd show somebody jogging down a mountain trail, or biking, mountain biking down the trail, and they'd jump off their bike or jump off the trail and they'd go, just hug this fisherman, or this hunter. Which usually you think, two user groups that don't like each other, it's like, "wait a second, I'm here to hike and enjoy, and you're here shooting at things, or trying to catch things." And the point of the campaign was that it was the fees that are paid by the hunters and the anglers that have actually led to the preservation of the spaces that can be used for hiking and biking, and that you should - you normally think you're at odds with that person, but really you should go say "thank you" to them, cause they make what you do possible. And that's kind of how I feel, like right now there is a lot of tension between motorists and cyclists, and I feel like if we could get motorists to think of it as "hug a cyclist," that every person who's on a bike is one less person who's in front of you on I-25 when it's taking you 45 minutes to do the 10-minute drive. And you can hit a point at which that makes a real difference. Not just for us and our quality of life getting around town, but also environmentally, and from a health perspective, when that many people are choosing a more active mode of transportation.

Since you started on city council, are there any specific issues where you've changed, or maybe moderated your position as you've learned more about them?

Well I think all the time, every time a big issue comes, you always have a gut reaction. And I think any time you take the time to sit down with the people on both sides of an issue, or all sides of an issue, because very rarely it's this side or that side, it always, the more information you have, the more you know, the more your opinion on something evolves. And so, I mean, I think across the board, I don't think there's an issue that my opinion *hasn't* moved as I've learned more. And I think that's sometimes lacking in this world that I'm in, is that people

dig in and say “this is my opinion on this thing and it will never change.” And then, even as new information comes, and new science comes, and new things emerge, it’s like “oh, I’ve already said that I believe this, and so I can’t change that.” And I don’t think that’s how we get good results, I think we get good results from dialogue, and from learning, and from thinking critically, and from saying “I didn’t have this information before and so maybe this is different than I first thought it was.” But that also makes it hard, because it’s harder than, you know, when somebody calls up, and they’re still in a black-and-white framework, and I’ve seen all the levels of grey, for them sometimes to understand where I’m voting because I’ve learned something, or the trade-offs, or it’s a more pie-in-the-sky I would vote here, but pragmatically, I can get this passed, and that’s one small step towards ideal, and I get that you’re upset, and I’m upset too that we’re not getting all the way there, but that’s where the seven votes broke. So I’d say every issue, every time you learn more, things change, your mind grows, and your perspective shifts a little bit.

Besides calling you, or haranguing you in an ice cream shop, what are the next most important things that your constituents can do to promote the changes or the policies that they think are important for the city?

I think get involved, you know. Show up to your RNO meetings. These neighborhoods that have 3,000, 6,000 people in them, and you have a great turnout, you think it’s awesome when there are 20 people in an RNO room. Just like my understanding of an issue grows when I talk to people on all sides, our ability to work together as a community and get good results gets only better the more people that are at the table, because you know if it’s these same 20 people, you don’t know what perspective you’re missing, you don’t know whose voice is not at the table, and so I think get involved. Show up to meetings, whether they’re PTA meetings or RNO meetings or Denverite meetings, or a City Council meeting, and don’t be afraid to share your opinions with me, certainly, but also with your neighbors. Talk, and vote. We, in November, in three weeks from last Tuesday, I don’t even know if this will be printed by that time, but people will have voted. And there are 11 statewide initiatives and nine city ones, I think That’s 20 things that are going to have a pretty direct impact on us, and our lives, and our city, and those are really important issues. It’s the longest ballot in Denver’s history, it’s six pages long, and I’m always shocked by the number of people who don’t vote, and then I’m second shocked by the number of people who under-vote, which means they vote for Governor, because that one they know a lot about, and then they trail off and they don’t vote down the ballot, and often who is the Governor has less direct impact on your daily life than certainly some of these local initiatives will have. And so those would be my things: Get involved, don’t be afraid to share your opinion with your neighbors, and with your elected officials, and vote.

Great. So if you either had lost that election in 2015, or someday when you get off city council, what do you think you’ll do at that point?

Certainly if I had lost, my job - I took a leave of absence from my job, but I didn’t quit it - and I would have gone directly back to the Greenway Foundation. Honestly, this is the first time I’ve had a job with an expiration date, either four, eight, or 12 years - one of those three, I will no longer have this job. So it’s a brave new world. My undergrad is in the natural resources, my graduate degree is in non-profit management, so I think likely I will end up somewhere in the nonprofit world. But had you asked me, even two years, a year before I won, certainly before I ran, where I would be, I would never have told you here. So I’ve also, I guess, adapted to the fact that maybe I don’t know as well as I thought I do, where I’m going to be a year, five years, or....uh... nine years from today.

So, this is probably not the first interview or press-related thing you’ve done, so I want to ask you what’s the hardest question you’ve had to answer, the hardest question you’ve been asked, how did you answer it at that point, and if you could go back and answer it a different way, would you change your answer?

Oh boy... that is a tough question. I think, I haven't actually - I mean certainly compared to my former life I've been interviewed a lot, and I have been in the media a lot, but honestly, I haven't - if you go online and start searching council members, I'm not, even now that I'm council president - I'm not the media darling I guess. So I haven't had that many hard-hitting interviews, so I don't know. I honestly can't remember something, an instance where I thought "boy, I should have said that differently, or answered that differently." If I think of something, I'll follow up with you, but on the spot, I just can't - I can't think of it.

This is the last questions I have on my list here. It sounds like you've had a lot of success in your nonprofit work, some success in, you said, the recreation department or something like that?

That was never my job, that was a volunteer gig, but yeah, I was on the Parks and Rec Advisory Board for Chris Nevitt.

And you're on city council, you're there for a couple years and they elect you president, so the question I have for you is, is there a personality trait, a habit, or some kind of strength that's helped you a lot in your career, and if you could make an impression on other people that they should try to develop that trait, what would it be?

I mean, that's always hard to answer, a trait - and I'll say this is something I value and that I believe I do, but there's often a gap between how you believe you're coming off and how you do, so, again, another question you should ask some other people other than me. But you know, I think my willingness to listen, it's something I said over and over on the campaign trail, that if elected, I would work really hard to listen and find all the different opinions that are out there before making up my mind. And I think that that's, again, often something that you don't see a lot, or people already have their mind made up, so then they don't want to listen. And so I really do endeavor to listen to my colleagues, the ones that, on issues when I agree with them and when I don't, but really hear them out, and be willing to say "you taught me something that I didn't know, and let me go put that back in the hopper with everything." And I think the other thing is just to be authentic, to be you. I think way too many people try to be who they think people want them to be, or who think that by masking who they are, that they will be more successful, and I think that all I've ever tried to do is be me, and to really be - when I ran for office, this is me. And be up-front about that. And I think that's also something that people relate a lot to. Because you can relate to somebody when you feel like you actually are seeing who they are rather than, there are often people in this job who have more of a public persona that they are, and then people who know them are like "oh yeah, they're not really like that." Usually when you see me talking, when I come to the neighborhood meeting, when you get me going, there's - that's who I am. And so, I think those things. The ability to listen, and being authentic where people don't have to wonder - you know, like my colleagues, when they were deciding to elect me for leadership, pro tem for two years and then president. That I listen, that I'm wanting to help them when they need it, and that they know who I am, and that I'm not saying one thing to their face and then turning around and doing something else. I think those things not only help there, but also help in every interaction with friends, and family, and neighbors, and everything. I've never purported to anyone I ever asked for a vote from, or anything, that we'd always agree. In fact, I always told people that my wife and I have agreed to live in the same house, on the same block, in the same city, to have the same number of kids, the same number of pets, which is often a point of contention, and yet not a day goes by where there's not something she and I disagree on. And if she and I, who have agreed to all of those grand compromises are not always going to agree, then one thing I can guarantee you is you and I are not always going to agree. But I am always going to take the time to listen to you if there is something you want to say, and I promise to work as hard as I can to not make up my mind, or be willing to change my mind, if you teach me something that I didn't know, or you knew more about and my understanding of the issue has grown.

Thank you very much for taking this time, I really appreciate it.

Of course!

Entrevista con Jolon Clark, Presidente del Concejo Municipal de Denver y Representante del Distrito 7 (Condensada)

Entrevista realizada el 18 de octubre de 2018. Esta es una versión abreviada, pero puede escuchar todo el contenido o leer la transcripción, ambas publicadas en el sitio de web de Athmar Park y en la página de Facebook.

Ian Melchior: *Has estado en el consejo de la ciudad unos tres o cuatro años. ¿Cuál ha sido la parte más difícil de su trabajo en el Concejo Municipal?*

Representante Jolon Clark: Ooh, definitivamente la parte más difícil es, especialmente en este clima político, hay tantas personas enojadas por lo que está sucediendo políticamente en nuestro país a nivel nacional, a veces a nivel estatal. Yo represento la menor cantidad de personas de cualquier cargo electo. Reuniré contigo para tomar un café, estoy en el distrito todo el tiempo, y podrás llamarme y buscarme, y hablar conmigo por teléfono o en persona, ¡o iré a tu casa!

A veces tengo la peor parte de todo eso. No importa lo gruesa que sea tu piel, nunca se siente bien cuando te gritan, especialmente si es algo con lo que no tienes nada que ver o si no tienes ningún control. La gente no entiende lo que la carta constitutiva, el documento del pueblo, me ha otorgado autoridad, así que solo me gritan sobre todo.

Una vez estaba en la heladería con mis hijos, y alguien decidió que era el lugar adecuado para empezar a gritarme. Mis hijos están llorando, ya no quieren helado, se salen de la tienda. Sabes, ese tipo de impacto en mi familia, cuando se trata de un hogar, es la parte más difícil del trato.

¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas comunes que la gente le pregunta que no son el rol del Concejo Municipal?

Hay cosas sobre las que no tenemos autoridad porque estamos anticipados a nivel estatal o federal. Plástico de un solo uso, por ejemplo: hay una ley a partir de 1979 en los libros del estado que dice específicamente que ningún municipio puede prohibir ningún tipo de plástico por ningún motivo. Podemos hablar de ello, y creo que probablemente podríamos obtener bastantes votos sobre algo así. No importa, porque no podemos hacerlo legalmente.

Luego hay cosas sobre las que no tenemos control, la oficina del alcalde las tiene, la gente quiere un golpe de velocidad, una señal de alto o una acera más amplia. No puedo, soy el poder legislativo del gobierno. Puedo cambiar las leyes en la ciudad, pero no puedo legislar dónde va una señal de stop, o una señal de stop de cuatro vías, o toques de velocidad. Esos están bajo la rama ejecutiva, bajo el alcalde, y esas son la mayor parte de las cosas que la gente llama a mi oficina buscando.

¿Cuáles áreas específicas desearía que el Concejo Municipal pudiera hacer cosas? Cosas sobre las que no tienes control, que desearías tener.

Bueno, cuando llegas a este trabajo, tu primer deseo es que tengas todo el poder, ¿verdad? Porque yo soy

como, "Hey! ¡Vamos a hacer las cosas! "Pero trabajo con nuestros representantes estatales y nuestros senadores estatales. No los necesitamos para prohibir las bolsas de plástico en todo el estado, solo tienen que derogar la ley que dice que no podemos.

Es por eso que algunas ciudades no tienen marihuana en ellas y otras sí. Nos dieron el control local. Y así, incluso si es algo que no quiero que ocurra, seguiría abogando por el control local, porque creo que lo que tiene sentido en Denver es muy diferente de Sterling, Colorado. Las ciudades deben tener amplia autoridad sobre las reglas dentro de su ciudad. No debemos ser adelantados a nivel estatal.

En tu primer mandato como concejal de la ciudad, ¿cuáles son los logros del que estás más orgulloso?

Cuando me eligieron por primera vez, un guardabosques de la ciudad se acercó a mí y me dijo: "Quiero mostrarte lo que está pasando con Emerald Ash Bore (EAB)". Éramos como 7 de nosotros metidos en un automóvil, conduciendo por Milwaukee y Chicago, y Madison, mirando el impacto de esta plaga en los árboles. Y fue sorprendente al ver la imagen donde estaban estos árboles gigantes y estos columpios de llantas en los patios de las personas, y ahora no hay un solo árbol en la calle.

El guardabosques de la ciudad estaba tratando de tocar el timbre y decir: "Esto va a matar 1 de cada 5 árboles en Denver". Así que presioné a mis colegas para que lucharan y pusieran 3 millones de dólares en el presupuesto para tratar de manera proactiva con eso, y ahora otras ciudades vienen a Denver para decir "¿qué estás haciendo y cómo estás tan preparado para esto?" Porque estamos mejor preparados que cualquier ciudad ha sido alguna vez.

Eso, y a principios de este año, trabajé con miembros de la comunidad y defendí en su nombre para instalar el paso de peatones en Broadway. Estoy orgulloso de eso, porque ayuda con nuestros objetivos de Visión Cero. Ayuda con el espacio peatonal en un corredor de cercanías. Pero también porque era una declaración física acerca de cuán inclusiva es nuestra ciudad, y por eso también fue un punto culminante.

Cuál ha sido el resultado más decepcionante, algo que desearías hubiera sido diferente.

Este es un poco torpe. Tuvimos un gran debate sobre estos pequeños lotes y la cantidad de estacionamiento que deben tener. Y hay un par de desarrolladores que encontraron esta escapatoria. Un hombre compró dos lotes de 6,250 pies cuadrados. Así que usted y la casa de su vecino, 104 unidades, cero plazas de aparcamiento. Esa [ley de zonificación] tenía la intención de preservar propiedades comerciales pequeñas e históricas en Colfax, Broadway y Pearl Street, y se estaba abusando al máximo.

Obtuve los votos para aprobar mi factura, para aumentar ligeramente los requisitos de estacionamiento en estos pequeños lotes desde cero. Pero fue un aumento tan pequeño. Tuve que comprometerme tanto para conseguir algo que pasaría. Al mismo tiempo, era extraño luchar contra los carriles para bicicletas y los peatones, pero también luchar por más estacionamiento. Al final, no creo que hiciéramos lo suficiente en comparación con lo que deberíamos haber hecho, y fui golpeado por la gente que normalmente aboga por hacer cualquier cosa.

¿Hay soluciones realmente alocadas, locas y creativas, que si tuvieras poderes dictatoriales por un día, intentarías algo realmente fuera de lo común?

Trataría de desplegar una red de bicicletas completa que conecte a todas nuestras comunidades, junto con el recurso compartido de bicicletas eléctricas que estamos empezando a ver. Si cada persona realmente La elección de la movilidad para las bicicletas, creo que mucha gente lo elegiría. No se trata de atraer a todos, pero se trata de hacer que suficientes personas vayan en bicicleta para que realmente, como motorista, piense "hey, no es tan malo conducir porque no hay tanta gente".

Siento que en este momento hay mucha tensión entre los motoristas y ciclistas, y si pudiéramos hacer que los

conductores piensen en cada persona que está en una bicicleta como una persona menos que está delante de usted ... puede llegar a un punto en el que eso una diferencia real No solo para desplazarse por la ciudad, sino también para el medio ambiente, y desde una perspectiva de salud, cuando muchas personas están eligiendo un modo de transporte más activo.

Desde que comenzó en el ayuntamiento, ¿hay algún problema específico en el que haya cambiado o moderado su posición a medida que aprendió más sobre ellos?

En general, no creo que haya un problema por el que mi opinión no haya cambiado, ya que he aprendido más. A veces falta: la gente profundiza y dice "esta es mi opinión sobre esto y nunca cambiará". No creo que sea así que obtengamos buenos resultados, creo que obtenemos buenos resultados del diálogo, del aprendizaje y de pensar críticamente y de decir "No tenía esta información antes y, por lo tanto, tal vez sea diferente de lo que pensé al principio".

Además de llamarlo o arengarlo en una heladería, ¿cuáles son las cosas que sus electores pueden hacer para promover los cambios o las políticas que creen que son importantes para la ciudad?

Involucrarse. Preséntate a tus reuniones RNO. Estos vecindarios tienen de 3 a 6,000 personas, y es asombroso cuando hay 20 personas en una sala RNO. Nuestra capacidad para trabajar juntos y obtener buenos resultados mejora a medida que más personas están en la mesa. Preséntese a las reuniones, ya sean reuniones de la PTA, reuniones de RNO o reuniones de Denver, o una reunión del Concejo Municipal, y no tenga miedo de compartir sus opiniones.

Habla, y vota. Para cuando esto se imprima, la gente habrá votado. Hay 11 iniciativas estatales y nueve de ciudades, eso es 20 cosas que van a tener un impacto bastante directo en nosotros. A menudo, quién es el Gobernador tiene menos impacto directo en su vida diaria de lo que ciertamente tendrán algunas de estas iniciativas locales. Así que participa, no tengas miedo de compartir tu opinión con tus vecinos y funcionarios electos, y vota.

Parece que ha tenido mucho éxito en su trabajo sin fines de lucro y en el ayuntamiento. ¿Hay algún rasgo que te haya ayudado en tu carrera?

Creo que mi disposición para escuchar. Trabajo muy duro para escuchar y encontrar todas las opiniones diferentes que existen antes de decidirme. Nunca he dicho a nadie que siempre estaríamos de acuerdo. Pero siempre voy a tomarme el tiempo para escucharte si hay algo que quieras decir, y prometo trabajar tan duro como pueda para no tomar una decisión, o estar dispuesto a cambiar de opinión, si enseñas algo que no sabía o de lo que sabía más y mi comprensión del problema ha aumentado.

Y creo que lo otro es ser auténtico, ser tú. Demasiadas personas intentan ser quienes creen que las personas quieren que sean, o piensan que al enmascarar quiénes son, tendrán más éxito. Todo lo que he tratado de hacer es ser yo, y ser franco al respecto. Creo que eso también es algo con lo que las personas se relacionan mucho. Porque puedes relacionarte con alguien cuando sientes que realmente estás viendo quiénes son.

Muchas gracias por tomarse este tiempo, realmente lo aprecio.

¡Por supuesto!