

**Theresa Garza • Candidate for Raytown Board of Alderman, Ward 4 • 816.353.2341**  
**www.vote4theresa.com**

**1.) Why are you running for the Board of Alderman, and what are your qualifications?**

Raytown is primarily a community of working families, like mine, and we deserve better representation. We need someone who understands that governing is about listening to others. I believe I do this well.

I grew up in a single-parent household in Raytown. My mother often worked several jobs and weekends resulting in my grandparents playing a very active role in my upbringing. My Grandpa Dan instilled in me a strong work ethic and pro-labor stance. My grandmothers, Alice and Ninfa, modeled a drive to give back to others and the community, which in turn, I developed. By working together to solve problems and enacting policies that allows residents to live, raise a family, grow a business, or even retire in Raytown just like my mother and grandparents, we can continue to make Raytown a great place to be.

Having served previously on the Jackson County Legislature, I have no delusions about the work and challenges involved. During my time at the County, I served as the 2014 Vice-Chair and was assigned to the following Committees during my tenure with the County: Budget, Finance and Audit, Public Works, Land Use, and Justice and Law Enforcement. My experience at the County directly correlates to the responsibilities associated with being on the Raytown Board of Alderman. Additionally, I have a Master's in Public Administration, two certifications in Economic Development, and a certification in Public Finance.

**2.) What are the top needs of the city?**

Based on conversations with residents before I filed and as I am canvassing, the common issues/concerns I hear are based around the following core items:

1. Public Safety - People in this community desire safe neighborhoods. We need to prioritize law enforcement and their community efforts to reduce crime. Additionally, we need to improve our ability to work with local resources to serve the social, health, and public safety needs of our citizens and figure out ways to work together to support such efforts/initiatives.
2. Basic City Services - Infrastructure is another source of community frustration. People expect leadership to do better. Encompassing this category is the need to maintain and revitalize our parks, making them safe for young and old residents. In all cases, people believe in municipal governance that works for them, is transparent, and is honest.
3. Economic Opportunity and Development - Support working families, small businesses, and encourage sustainable and impactful development. As a Board, we need to work together to make sure that our community is a great place to do business and remain competitive with surrounding communities.

**3.) What budget experience do you have, and what are your priorities on city's budget?**

As a County Legislator, I oversaw a \$400M budget, six funds, and seven Departments. I was also the chair of the County's Budget Committee, twice. While at the County, I earned a certificate in Public Finance through the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Outside of my public experience, I currently manage a budget of \$300 thousand for my department and sit on the Corporate Social Responsibility Team that provides grants and sponsorships to communities and organizations throughout the western half of Missouri. Additionally, I sit on numerous boards and deal with the budgets/financials of those non-profits. A governmental budget is a blueprint of the City and Elected Officials priorities. See Q2 response on my priorities.

**4.) Where are your favorite places to spend time in our city and why?**

I probably eat with my family at Rincon Tarasco, which is in my ward, at least once a week. The food is excellent, and the owner and team are delightful! I often schedule work-related breakfast or lunch meetings at several other restaurants in town: Los Campos, Applebee's, and Ginger's. As someone who believes in supporting other women, Serenity Café is a wonderful place to meet. They have tasty chai (my favorite coffee shop beverage), treats, and food. Especially; in the fall when they have their pumpkin spice chai. Yum! Speaking of women-owned businesses in Raytown, Morgana's has the best gluten-free cupcakes and desserts. When asked for recommendations on who is the best gluten-free bakery in the metro area, I always point people in her direction. Plus, we went to high school together so supporting her is extremely important to me! About once a month, my family and I head to Breakfast and Lunch Lovers on a Saturday or Sunday morning. My grandsons love their chocolate chip and strawberry pancakes. Also, weather permitting, I greatly utilize Rock Island Trail and Kenagy Park a lot. They're both perfect for my friends and me to get in our walking steps; During covid, we surpassed our goal of 20 miles a month and clocked in 162 miles in almost 6 months! The last place would be Crane Brewing, a huge asset to not just Raytown but the KC Metro area. They're always willing to help any non-profit due to their generosity.

**5.) What would you do to include the citizens in the decision making process in our city?**

Send out a monthly electronic newsletter similar to what I did when I was on the County Legislature, hold bi-monthly coffees/gatherings within my ward, be accessible and open to conversations by providing my home number and email address so I can be reached, and attend community events/meetings when able and/or invited.

**6.) Do you believe city hall is transparent or not, and would you make any changes?**

In my opinion, there is always opportunity to improve. Those that believe that their leaders are acting outside of a transparent manner should be heard. Often, it's about misunderstanding the process or the laws and regulations that hover over municipalities. Being transparent starts with strong leadership and listening.

**7.) What are the duties of an Alderman, and what is the hierarchy at city hall including elected and department heads?**

Typically, BOA members manage two kinds of matters. The first is constituent needs or specific complaints and the second is longer-range issues of public policy. Alderperson's make city policy and decisions for the city, including zoning, as well as, oversee the management of finances, and keep a journal of their proceedings. Alderpersons also adopt or reject any and all ordinances, as long as they are not inconsistent or incompatible with the state constitution and laws, They are tasked with enforcing rules of order and electing a Mayor Pro Tem to preside in the Mayor's absence.

The Mayor presides over board meetings which give them the authority to recognize, rule out of order, and determine which motions are given priority. They also have veto power. Simply put, the Mayor can propose, suggest, and encourage the adoption of a proposal but can only vote to break a tie. They also sign all commissions and appointments and approve all official bonds unless directed otherwise per an ordinance. In Missouri, they also maintain pardon and remission powers for City ordinance violations.

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As with any Board, their role is to govern, not micro-manage the daily activities. This is why the Board hires a professional, qualified city manager who provides direct staff assistance to the BOA and manages the day-to-day operations of city departments and staffing needs. In times of question or concern, the Board should interact directly with the City Manager and allow for that person to properly research or investigate the item or concerns at hand. Per the City Manager's direction, the City Staff will implement the budget, ordinances, and resolutions adopted and agreed upon by the BOA as a whole. Carrying out or implementing BOA policy is established on a given issue by a majority vote of the BOA members.

**8.) Describe an ethical dilemma you've faced. How did you resolve it?**

There are two personal dilemma's I've faced - one from my service in the county and one personal. When I served in the County Legislature, the FBI was investigating someone I served with. It is my understanding that I can now share some details since the legalities of the issue have been put to rest. Through that investigation the FBI requested clarity to certain items and had clarifying questions of things that happened under that person's leadership. We had no knowledge of several items that were brought to our attention because that person circumvented the legislative process. The resolution was that a couple of my colleagues and I cooperated with the FBI to the best of the ability. From a personal perspective, our household finances were managed by my then husband. I was running for office and learned about midway through the campaign that he had not filed taxes for several years. I dropped out of the race because I knew the responsibility fell upon us both since we were legally married, even though we were separated and living apart at the time. Ultimately, we hired Optima Tax to resolve the issue and set up a payment plan.

**9.) What are your views on staff's salaries and benefits?**

At a time when workforce shortages and development is a trending topic, it is important that we do our best to ensure that our salaries and benefits are competitive in order to attract and retain excellent, qualified employees.

**10.) Where does the city's funding come from, and is there an effort to change the funding (positive or negative)?**

Like most jurisdictions, funding comes from various traditional revenue streams: property taxes/levies, sales taxes, franchise and/or user fees, bonds, and improvement/development districts. The City may occasionally receive grant dollars from federal, state, and regional entities. I am open to hearing suggestions and ideas from our residents so that we may explore their plausibility and determine if funding sources/changes can be implemented.

**11.) Should elected officials keep their taxes current to remain in their elected position, and pay taxes to the jurisdiction in which they live? Please explain your reasons.**

First and foremost, the Revised Statutes of Missouri, RSMO Section 115.306 already covers this, but since asked, please see my response to Q8. Here's the thing, at the end of the day we are simply electing one of our peers – nothing less, nothing more. Elected officials aren't perfect. No one is. And, we never know what someone is going through or dealing with at any given moment. Flaws make us real and genuine and as long as they're honest about the situation and have corrected it or are attempting to correct it, we should provide empathy and grace, much like we would with our family and friends. And, if you're curious, I am current on my payment plan, and with the unexpected passing of my ex-husband last year, we are recalculating the amount owed.

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**12.) Should the board vote on their own raises without a vote of the people, and why?**

This is handled in a variety of ways throughout MO and the country. St. Louis, Kansas City, Missouri City, St. Joe, Creve Coeur, and several other cities within MO have all voted on their own raises, so it is not uncommon. Some municipalities, such as Jackson County and State lawmakers (with the exception of statewide officials), tie their pay raises to that of a Circuit Judge increase. The latest trend is to set up an independent commission, which Raytown did, that would decide when, how, and by how much of a pay bump elected officials should receive. This would take the matter out of the elected official's hands and the acrimony out of the debate while still ensuring that elected officials are compensated for their time, energy, and skills. It would also lower the risk of shutting out good candidates and opening up the socio-economic diversity among BOA members.

**13.) When was the last time you attended a board meeting, and was it in person?**

In this day and age, with so many people working remotely and technological advances, we have the privilege of being able to watch meetings from the comfort of our own homes. Which numerous, CURRENT, Board of Alderpersons choose to do as well. In addition to watching online, we can download the minutes, agendas, or circle back and watch the meeting the next day if we were unable to watch it in real time. I have watched numerous board meetings with the exception of the BOA working session on February 28<sup>th</sup> because (as of 3/4/23) the video meeting has not been posted to the City's website. But, the minutes are available and did review them.

When I am elected, I will be present for meetings in the same manner that I showed up for my County Legislative meetings.

**City of Raytown Livestreams + Recordings**

Video	Duration
Board of Aldermen Feb 07, 2023	01h 06m
Board of Aldermen Jan 17, 2023	1h 04m
Board of Aldermen Jan 10, 2023	01h 07m
Board of Aldermen Dec 20, 2022	01h 02m
Board of Aldermen Dec 06, 2022	00h 35m
Board of Aldermen Nov 15, 2022	01h 03m
Board of Aldermen Nov 01, 2022	01h 02m
Board of Aldermen Oct 18, 2022	01h 03m

**14.) Do you own or rent, and do you believe either makes a difference in how an elected official represents the constituents?**

I own. How our residents are represented should never be based on if they rent or own or any other arbitrary reason. If they are residents within our city boundaries, they should have a voice and be able to express their concerns.

**15.) How would you spend a \$1 million grant if you could spend it any way you wanted?**

Infrastructure needs, making sure that we are competitive with other municipalities in the area regarding employee recruitment and compensation, and possibly conducting a development strategy to help grow our city

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**16.) What is your position on the April ballot marijuana tax question?**

The question is already going to be on the ballot so it is now in the hands of the voters and I will support their decision. However, with that said, it is in my opinion that if there is a way to add revenue to the city budget so that we may provide better services and that does not place an undue burden on our residents and businesses, then we should be supportive.

**Please include a brief bio, and any additional information you would like to share.**

Bio Attached

My commitment to serving others and improving the community has been illustrated over the years - both in my professional and personal life. I have had great success around leveraging partnerships, building teams, and strategic planning throughout my professional career. Plus, my wealth of knowledge in policy and governmental affairs, economic development, budgetary and financial oversight will help to ensure that the City of Raytown is accountable and efficient on behalf of our residents.

At the local level, it is not about political agendas and ideologies but more about creating a collaborative atmosphere that solves community problems. It is important that our elected officials are available and accessible and that is exactly what I will be while serving on the Board of Alderman. Together, we can achieve success by having discussions, listening, and by being respectful of each other's ideas and suggestions. I am ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work on your behalf. That is why I am asking for your support and vote!