

# Madison Council Candidate Questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire is for your basic contact information and campaign media

Candidate Full Name \*

Nino Amato

Aldermanic District \*

9th Aldermanic District

Home Address \*

[REDACTED]

Email Address \*

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Phone \*

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Campaign website (if applicable)

AmatoForMadison.com

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) accounts, if any

AmatoForMadison.com

### Questionnaire - Part 2

Please state your position on the following issues.

Please limit answers to 500 words (approx. 3,500 characters). Any answers exceeding the word count limit will be redacted after 3,500 characters.

If you have completed this questionnaire before, you may skip any question that is not starred (\*\*) unless you would like to modify or update an answer submitted in a prior year. If a question is skipped, we will re-post the most recent submitted answer in its place.

## 1 Why are you seeking this office?

I am seeking the 9th District Aldermanic Seat because both of my opponents hold extreme ideologically and narrow political views on the far left and the far right. I am also motivated to run for the Common Council, given the anti-business and anti-UW Madison attitude that exists with the current Mayor and many members of the current City Council.

As for my vision, I am running for the Madison Common Council to create a safer and more sustainable economic and environmental future for our neighborhoods, local businesses and for all of Madison children and residents. My priorities for the 9th Aldermanic District & City of Madison are:

- (1) Create safer neighborhoods by investing in neighborhood policing & mental health interventions services (CARES intervention Program) and cost-effective traffic technology that will make our streets safer for drivers, bikes and pedestrians.
  - (2) Work collaboratively with the Madison Business Community, WHEDA and UW–Madison to retain and expand small and large businesses in the greater Madison Community - and to be a voice for business owners and developers in down town and in my district.
  - (3) Review and revise the City of Madison's 2012 environmental and economic Sustainability Plan, in collaboration with the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, the Building-Trades, UW-Madison Nelson Institute and local, county and state economic development experts - and examine ways to stream-line the City of Madison's environmental and building requirements/permits and to improve the timeliness of the regulatory review process for commercial, multi-family and single residential development.
  - (4) Provide the needed resources in the 2024 City Budget, to guarantee safe drinking water in all of Madison's drinking wells - with the focus on reducing PFAS toxins (forever man-made chemicals).
  - (5) Work collaboratively with the local businesses and neighborhoods to protect city greenway forests, tree islands & street tree canopies, which enhances property values and help lower urban heat rates, while mitigating Climate Change, through the sequestration of Co2 green house gas emissions, through natural tree preservation and growth.
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## 2. What in your background or experiences qualifies you to understand the unique needs facing small businesses?

I have over thirty years of senior executive leadership and management experience in private industry, government and the nonprofit world. I also have a successful record of accomplishments in community engagement & collaborative problem solving -- and have been recognized by community, government and business leaders for successfully dealing with complex city & state issues -- and bringing together diverse segments of our community & elected officials, in solving long-standing issues, where others have failed (Madison's first community pool, Unification of the City-County Public Health Depts., the City Task Force on Racial Profiling & Race Relations Report, which was support 19-1 by the Common Council).

As for economic development, I am the only candidate running for public office in Madison, who worked with both former Gov. Tommy Thompson (R) and Gov. Jim Doyle (D) administrations, that actually created jobs for Wisconsin's local and state economy. Unlike my aldermanic opponents, I grew up our family owned restaurant & hospitality retail businesses & know first hand the challenges faced by small business owners. I also have practical experience as the first business manager & executive VP for First Reality Group Inc. & I understand the challenges developers face in both the commercial and residential development in Madison & Dane County. I also bring my practical knowledge & expertise on energy reliable & affordability issues, as the senior VP for Wisconsin Power & Light Co. (1985-1998); and under Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson 4 terms in office, successfully repositioned Wisconsin's anti-business image to a national leader in Bio-Technology & Agricultural Science, Forestry & Printing Technology, and Manufacturing Auto-Parts Industry.

## 3. What are the most important issues facing businesses in your district?

Trying to survive this post-pandemic era, today's economic inflations & supply-chain delivery issues and the extremely tight labor market. Whether you are a national business chain, franchise, family owned or small business, supply chain issues and hiring capable and experienced employees are growing more challenging by the day. Combined this with Madison's rising property taxes and increased property tax assessments, it is harder today to turn a decent profit, than anything I've seen in the last 25 years. As for city regulations, I will work with business and government leaders, to determine what we can collectively streamline the building and permitting process for new commercial and residential multi-family projects, and the endless city committee, boards and commissions over-view process, that causes unnecessary delays and more costs to complete. NOTE: When I was on the UW-Board of Regents, I co-chaired our working committee on the UW-Building Review Process and we streamlined and lowered the permitting and government review process by 18 months vs. the 3 to 4 years before a shovel could go into the ground.

#### 4. How do you define economic development? Please elaborate.

Let me say from the outset, there is no reason to believe that economic development and economic growth - and tackling climate change are not inherently incompatible. Given my professional experience in creating jobs and advancing economic develop, there are two defining challenges the business community and government leaders are facing over the next 15-20 years - in managing the economic and community risks associated with climate change - and the growing cost of doing business and governing. \* In that context, public policy-makers and local & state business leaders must engage and work together on mitigating climate change and developing new economic development policies and practices. If we act collectively, I believe economic development, and the need for a growing our local, state and regional economies, can be done - while tackling climate change mitigation -- which is in everyone's economic interest. Since the Industrial Revolution, economic development has generally been tied to increasing greenhouse gas emissions from the fossil fuel industry. Therefore we must move from fossil fuel-based energy production, to low-carbon and renewable energy sources, that can help sustain and bridge the same or even higher levels of production and economic development, while reducing Co2 emissions. Thereby decoupling economic development and growth from GHG emissions, while developing low-carbon and renewable energy resources and the technological advancement of micro-nuclear power plants that are being developed in France, Sweden, Norway, Finland and in the state of Wyoming, is the path to decouple the myth, that economic development needs to take a back seat to mitigating climate change.

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#### 5. What is your perception of Madison's business brand? How do you think Madison is perceived locally and nationally?

Prior to 2019, Madison had turn the corner of being scene as anti-business. In fact, between the global magnet of UW-Madison and its scientific, medical and bio-science research, Madison was was being recognized as a growing international and prosperous community and an excellent place to raise a family and start or grow your business. I Know this for a fact, after visiting time in the middle-east, China (PRC), several Asian-Pacific nations and my travels throughout western and eastern Europe. However, since the election of the current Mayor in April of 2019, Madison's business brand has been tragically damaged and disfigured by one political blunder after another by Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway -- and by a handful of politically divisive city council members, with their extreme far left ideologies views and self-righteous indignation. But with a new city council, who can keep the existing Mayor in check or working collaboratively with a new Mayor, we can regain and reposition Madison's Business Brand both nationally and internationally.

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## 6. How can Madison best attract and retain a diverse workforce?

Having been a senior executive at WI. Power & Light Co., and successfully transforming our old engineering, while male dominate culture, to a one of the most cultural diverse public utilities in the country, it takes corporate leadership and community engagement. Below are the 6 guiding principles that will help attract and retain a quality diverse workforce:

(1) Corporations need to get involved in pursuing social justice issues and equal opportunities for citizens of color, literally from the Board level down; (2) Health care organizations and retail pharmaceutical corporations need to facilitate mobile family health care programs targeting at risk neighborhoods; (3) our local law enforcement (MPD) must be given the necessary resources, to re-engage in on the ground neighborhood policing and build community trust; (4) Our faith communities need to work together and not compete for resources, and work collaboratively to tear down racial and socio-economic barriers for higher education and jobs; (5) All parents of every color need to take specific, tangible steps to transmit social justice values to their children; and (6) Children of all ages need to "get involved" through cooperative activities in less privileged neighborhoods, in collaborations with United Way of Dane County, Downtown Rotary and the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce.

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## 7. What strategies would you recommend for the city to meet the diverse needs of workforce housing?

This is one of the most challenging issue of our time, as it relates to affordable housing for every working generation, regardless of color or income. At best, we are Madison is using a band-aid approach, that does not even begin to meet the growing demands of inter-generational and affordable housing. The next Mayor needs to organize the League of Municipalities and County Board's Association in cooperation with our Dane County Executive and his counter parts, to put increase pressure on our state legislators and congressional delegation, to address this issue with new housing policy, tax incentives to developers and the necessary financial resources of the federal government.

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**\*\*8** In what ways can city government support entrepreneurs of color working to start and grow an emerging business in Madison?

"CAPITAL - CAPITAL - CAPITAL" - In collaboration with the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, our state legislatures, SBA and Madison community and governmental leaders need to create a "Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Company (MESBIC) for So. Madison and at-risk neighborhoods. I first proposed this idea (MESBIC), when I was an executive at WP&L and we helped fund and founded the first MESBIC in the City of Milwaukee. Then in May of 1999, the Madison City Council & Mayor Sue Bauman adopted and supported the creation of a MESBIC for south Madison, which was part of the Task Force on Race Relations, that I Chaired and recommend in a 51 page report. Unfortunately, the Mayor and City Council dropped the ball on the further development of a MESBI, following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center & the Pentagon. It's time for the private sector and local governmental leadership to create a 21st Century Minority Enterprise Business Investment Company.

**\*\*9.** What is your assessment of Madison's transportation system? What priority improvements are needed to support mobility for a growing workforce?

The Mayor's Bus Rapid Transit outreach has failed to truly engage the needs for a growing workforce in need of public transportation the Mayor also failed the needs of essential workers who live in marginalized communities, our elderly who want access to shop and at risk school children, who need to get to school All of which flies in the face of public transit equity Under the Mayor's BRT proposal, residents could get less service due to inadequate geographic coverage & therefore, there needs to be more in depth demographic analysis by an independent third party, credible public transit planning groups to ensure riders with the most workforce needs Public Transit is essential for work, access to city services, parks, health clinics, business services & commerce & grocery stores The mayor's BRT rush to judgement will also destroy historic State Street & small businesses

**\*\*10** A challenge that often comes with growth are issues impacting crime and safety. Some of these challenges are real; others perceived. In either case, it impacts livability and our ability to recruit and retain talent to Madison. Do you view Madison as a safe community and what is the Common Council's role in building safe communities?

Now more than ever, the Madison Common Council needs to embrace common sense solutions in reducing the epidemic of gun violence, gang shootings, burglaries, sexual assaults, road-rage and auto theft, that are impacting the public safety of our city and nearly every neighborhood. Therefore we must create safer neighborhoods by reducing Madison's crime rate, and by investing in neighborhood community policing and mental health interventions and services (CARES intervention Program).

NOTE: The incumbent 9th Dist. Alder Conklin opposed the six new neighborhood police officers for the neighborhoods adjacent to Memorial, West, East & LaFollette High Schools, during the 2023 Budget Process, which was funded with a 3 year federal COPS Grant. I supported Chief Barns on the Neighborhood COPS funding program for 2023 - 2026. The same was true during the 2022 Budget Process, I supported the 8 additional police officers after the City annexed the Town of Madison and Alder. Conklin opposed it.

**\*\*If offered an endorsement from the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, would you accept it?** \*

Yes

No

**\*\*By submitting this candidate questionnaire, you agree that the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce may publish it with the intent of sharing it with its membership and the general public.** \*

I acknowledge the Chamber will publish my answers to this questionnaire.

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