

Waveland municipal candidate questionnaire

1. What is your educational/professional background and how would you apply that to your office on behalf of the people of Waveland?

I am a lifelong resident of Waveland and a graduate of Bay High School. I earned my degree in Paralegal Studies and spent 22 years working in the legal field before making a career change into real estate, where I am now an Associate Broker.

My legal background taught me something that I think would be extremely important as an alderman: don't make a decision until you've done your research. As a paralegal, I learned to look beyond the surface, gather the facts, ask questions and research an issue before reaching a conclusion. Sometimes the answer isn't the first one you find, and I believe the same is true when you're dealing with concerns that affect an entire city.

Real estate has given me another perspective. Every day I work with people, property, contracts, zoning, negotiations and difficult decisions. Both careers have taught me the importance of listening, communicating, paying attention to details and working well with people.

I've also been fortunate to serve and be involved in our community in many different ways over the years. Those experiences have allowed me to work alongside people from all walks of life and have only strengthened how much I care about this community.

If elected, I would bring all of that experience with me. I won't pretend that I will always have the answer. But I will listen, research, ask questions and make decisions based on the facts while always remembering the people those decisions affect.

2. What neighborhood do you live in and why? Where are your favorite places to spend time in Waveland?

I currently live in Ward 2, although I spent the majority of my life living in Ward 1. The truth is, Waveland has always simply been home to me. My roots are throughout this community, and I feel very fortunate to have spent my life here.

I love my neighborhood, and the neighbors I've met have been so genuine and welcoming. That's one of the things I appreciate most about Waveland. You can move from one side of town to another and still feel that same sense of community.

One of my favorite places will always be Waveland Beach. Whether I'm watching a sunset, taking a walk, spending time with friends and family or just sitting near the water, it reminds me how fortunate we are to live here.

I also really enjoy seeing the new life and growth happening throughout Waveland, especially along Coleman Avenue. For those of us who have been here for many years, it's exciting to see businesses, investment and activity returning to areas that have waited a long time for it. I love seeing people walking, visiting our local businesses and spending time in our city.

To me, that's part of what makes this such an exciting time for Waveland. We can welcome new opportunities and new energy while still holding on to the character and hometown feeling that make our city special.

3. What do you think the number one issue Waveland is facing right now and what would you do to resolve it?

Going door to door and talking with residents throughout Ward 2, the concern I hear most often is drainage. I have also heard concerns about our streets and the need for improvements in certain areas. These are everyday issues that directly affect people's homes, property and quality of life, so I take those concerns seriously.

I also believe in being realistic. I don't want to make campaign promises about things that one alderman cannot accomplish alone. What I can promise is that I will bring those concerns to the table, ask questions, follow up and work with the mayor, Board of Aldermen and city departments to determine what can realistically be done.

Some of these issues may require long-term planning, engineering, prioritizing projects or finding additional funding. They may not have overnight solutions, but that doesn't mean we stop working toward them. Residents deserve to know their concerns are being heard and that someone is continuing to follow through.

4. What is the one thing you like the most about life in Waveland?

The people. Without question.

I love our beach, our sunsets and everything that comes with living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but those things alone aren't what make Waveland home. It's the people who do that.

There is a closeness here that is hard for me to put into words unless you've experienced it. It's knowing your neighbors. It's waving when you pass someone on the road, stopping to talk when you see someone around town and knowing that when somebody is going through a difficult time, people will show up for them. It's friendships that have lasted for decades and new friendships that somehow quickly feel like old ones.

I've spent my life here, and I was fortunate enough to raise my children here too. They grew up in this community and graduated from Bay High School just as I did. There is something very special about watching your children grow up in the same community that helped raise you.

I've watched Waveland celebrate together, struggle together, rebuild together and take care of one another. I've seen firsthand how strong the people of Waveland are. When this community gets knocked down, we don't stay down, and we don't leave our neighbors behind.

I am proud to say I'm from Waveland. I don't say that simply because I'm running for office. I say it because this community helped shape who I am. The people, the friendships, the memories and that feeling of knowing you're home when you come back across the Bay are what I love most.

We have a beautiful city, but the heart of Waveland will always be its people. That's something I hope we never lose.

5. If you could change one thing about Waveland, what would it be?

This may sound strange considering the question, but I don't want to change what Waveland is. I want to see us continue becoming the best version of Waveland we can be.

Those of us who were here for Hurricane Katrina know just how much this city and the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast have endured. We saw communities changed almost overnight. We lost homes, businesses, landmarks and places that held generations of memories. But we also saw something else. We saw what the people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast are made of.

We rebuilt. We helped our neighbors. We adapted. And we kept moving forward.

Waveland's recovery didn't happen overnight, and in many ways our story is still being written. That's why seeing the growth happening today means so much to me. New businesses, new homes, new investment and new opportunities are exciting, especially when you remember how far we've come.

But there is something especially unique about Waveland that I want us to protect as we grow. We aren't trying to become another city. We don't need to be. Waveland has its own personality, its own history and its own sense of community.

So if I could change one thing, it would be to make sure we become better at planning for the future while protecting the things that make us who we are. I want growth. I want opportunity. I want businesses to succeed and families to want to make Waveland their

home. But I also want the people who have already made their lives here to recognize the Waveland they love as we continue moving forward.

6. If you could change one thing about the city's zoning code, what would it be and why?

At this time, I honestly can't say there is one specific zoning code I would change, and I don't think it would be responsible for me to name something simply to have an answer to the question.

My real estate background has given me experience working with zoning and property-use issues, and I have also had the opportunity to be part of Waveland's Comprehensive Planning process. Being involved in those discussions has made me even more excited about the potential growth ahead for our city. It has also reinforced how important thoughtful planning is.

Zoning decisions can have long-lasting effects on homeowners, neighborhoods, businesses, property values and future development. What may appear to be a simple change on paper can affect many people in ways that aren't immediately obvious.

If elected, I want to understand not only what an ordinance says, but why it was put in place, whether it still serves its intended purpose and what the consequences of changing it might be. I want to listen to residents, property owners and businesses and look at the entire picture.

I'm excited about Waveland's future and the growth that is coming, but I want that growth to be thoughtful and responsible. Sometimes good leadership also means being willing to say, "I need to learn more before I make that decision."

7. If elected, what three steps would you take to put our city on a firmer financial footing?

I have attended some of the city's final budget reviews, and based on the information available to me as someone who is not yet an elected official, I don't think it would be fair or accurate for me to imply that Waveland is currently on unstable financial footing.

If elected, my three priorities would be **involvement, accountability and planning**.

I would stay actively involved in the budget process and take the time to understand where our money is coming from and where it is going. I would pay close attention to how taxpayer dollars are being spent because I believe we have an obligation to remember that every dollar the city spends ultimately belongs to the taxpayers. And finally, I would look at the long-term impact of financial decisions, not just what works for today.

I believe we should continue living within our means while making responsible investments in the services and infrastructure our residents depend on. As Waveland grows economically, I also believe we have an opportunity to plan carefully so that growth benefits the entire city and strengthens our financial future.

8. If elected, what would you do to involve residents in the decision-making process in Waveland?

For me, it starts with communication, accessibility and remembering who you are there to serve.

Going door to door during this campaign has probably been one of my favorite parts of the entire experience. I've had conversations with residents I might never have met otherwise. I've heard concerns, but I've also heard great ideas and wonderful stories about why people chose Waveland as their home. More than anything, I've listened.

Those conversations have reminded me that representing people should never begin and end at a Board meeting.

While I am running to serve as the Ward 2 alderman, I believe that once you sit at that table, the decisions you make affect far more than the boundaries of one ward. I would be elected by Ward 2, and I would always make sure the residents of Ward 2 have a voice, but I would also be helping make decisions for the entire City of Waveland. We are one community, and what happens in one part of our city ultimately affects all of us.

If elected, I want communication with residents to continue long after the campaign signs come down. I want people to attend meetings, ask questions and understand what is happening in their city. But I also know that people have jobs, children, families and responsibilities and can't always attend a Board meeting.

That's why accessibility matters to me. Call me. Send me a message. Tell me when something is wrong, but also tell me when you have an idea that could make Waveland better.

I also want to make it easier for residents to stay informed. I plan to continue using my website, vickiestapa.com, and my Facebook page, Vicki Reid Estapa for Ward 2 Alderman, as resources for information and updates about what is happening in our city. Communication needs to go both ways. I want residents to know what is happening, why decisions are being made and how they can be part of the conversation.

You shouldn't have to wait until election season to hear from the people representing you. Your voice should matter every day.

9. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

My first thought would be drainage, infrastructure and road improvements because those are needs I continue to hear about directly from residents.

But before spending a million dollars simply because it was available, I would want to determine where that money could make the biggest and most lasting difference. One million dollars sounds like a tremendous amount of money, but when you're talking about citywide infrastructure, it can go quickly. I would want us to be thoughtful with it.

Whether it ultimately went toward drainage, streets, neighborhoods, public spaces or another identified need, I would want it invested in something our residents could see, use and benefit from for years to come. I would also want to explore whether those funds could be used to leverage additional grant funding or other resources so that the original \$1 million could have an even greater impact for Waveland.

10. Why are you seeking public office and what do you hope to achieve?

This is home. It really is that simple for me.

I was raised here. I graduated from Bay High School. I chose to raise my children here, and they graduated from Bay High too. I've built my career here, raised my family here and made lifelong friendships here. This is where so many of the most important chapters of my life have taken place.

I've also watched this community go through things that could have forever changed who we are, and I've watched our people come together, pick themselves up, help their neighbors and rebuild. My connection to Waveland didn't begin when I decided to put my name on a campaign sign. Waveland has been part of my story my entire life, and now it is part of my children's story too.

I care deeply about what happens here because the decisions we make today are going to shape the Waveland our children, grandchildren, neighbors and future residents inherit.

There is a tremendous amount of growth and economic opportunity happening right now, and I am genuinely excited about it. I want to see our businesses succeed. I want new businesses to choose Waveland. I want our property values to remain strong, our neighborhoods to thrive and people to discover what those of us who live here already know. Waveland is a special place.

But during periods of growth, we also have to make sure the voices of the people who already call Waveland home aren't forgotten. That is extremely important to me.

Growth should not mean losing our identity. Progress should not mean residents feel like decisions are simply happening around them. The people who live here, raise their families here, own homes and businesses here and pay taxes here deserve to know that their concerns are being heard as our city changes.

I love the feeling of home we have here. I love that friendships matter. I love knowing my neighbors. I love that people show up for each other. I love our beach, our neighborhoods and the history that has made Waveland what it is. I want us to welcome progress without losing those things along the way.

If elected, I want to be an accessible and dependable voice for the residents of Ward 2, but I also understand that every vote I cast would be a decision affecting the City of Waveland as a whole. I want people to know they can call me, talk to me and trust that I will listen, even when we may not always agree.

I'm not running because I believe I have every answer, and I'm not running with a list of promises that sound good during an election but may not be realistic once you're sitting at the table.

I'm running because I love Waveland.

I care about where we've been, I care about the people who are here today, and I care very much about where we're going. I am willing to listen, willing to learn, willing to research the issues and willing to do the work.

If I have the opportunity to serve, I want to help Waveland continue moving forward while making sure the people who make this city home always have a voice in its future.