

# Colorado Springs City Council Candidate Survey

Candidate name: Mary Elizabeth Fabian

District: 5

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1. Do you support or oppose increasing taxes or fees, or the establishment of new taxes and fees? If you support increasing taxes and fees (or establishing new taxes and fees), what would be acceptable reasons to you?

I oppose increasing taxes and fees or establishing new versions. In 2020, I and two other photographers successfully launched a campaign against a permit fee in Garden of the Gods for professional photographers. I believe that charging fees like these are a barrier to economic prosperity and in the case of the Garden of the Gods fee - were an inrun around TABOR.

2. What is your position regarding the elimination of motor vehicle traffic lanes (road-dieting) in favor of installing bicycle lanes? Please explain.

As someone who works downtown daily, bike lanes are a headache that I do not enjoy. I do believe that with a tourism mindset they could be a benefit in certain areas. However, neighborhoods need to support and promote this from within, not have it mandated from the top down. I believe the current bike lanes should be part of a comprehensive plan to see if they make sense and add to our transportation goals, if they do, they should stay and if not, they should be converted as long as it is financially sound.

3. What is your opinion of infill projects that receive opposition from neighbors? Should zoning change projects proceed—even with opposition from the majority of neighbors living there?

As our community grows and changes, I believe that infill is necessary. People who work in Colorado Springs should not have to drive to Pueblo or the eastern part of the county to access available homes if they do not want to. However, we need to do this in a way that respects and represents the neighborhoods these projects affect. An example currently in D5 is the plan for Rustic Hills Mall. Neighbors are possibly being forced to have that zoning changed to industrial and before the city decides they need to truly listen to and represent the people who will literally have to live with the councilors decision

4. As Colorado Springs expands in population and infill projects press forward, infrastructure is stressed. What is your solution for financing new infrastructure?

The cost of new projects should be shouldered mostly by those who stand the most to gain, however the city should be willing to support these projects by reducing the red tape. Guarding against over- regulation

and giving developers the ability to create communities in a way that reduces unnecessary costs (like carrying loans for lengthy periods while waiting on final approvals) is one way to address this.

5. As COVID-19 closures and restrictions persist, many local businesses are suffering. What should be done for businesses and their employees?

I believe that political and economic freedom go hand in hand. The longer our shutdowns and reduced capacities exist, the longer it will be before our community can bounce back. I support reopening businesses - and as a business owner myself understand the concern for liability and loss if clients were to become ill. However, the longer businesses stay closed the more likely families and individuals will face eviction and potential economic devastation. Through community partnerships we can support and help families in the short term - but the best thing for our government to do is to focus on reopening our doors, protecting the most vulnerable, and encouraging economic health.

6. Local activists raised the issue of defunding the Colorado Springs Police Department. Do you support or oppose increasing the number of Colorado Springs police officers? Please explain.

The Colorado Springs Police Department is steadily losing trained officers and are understaffed. I am in favor of increasing the number of trained officers so that it can run more effectively and our response times can improve. I am against defunding the department but in favor of continuing and potentially increasing funding for response teams who are better equipped to handle mental health issues before crimes are committed. I also would like to look at designating courts to address both mental health, victimless crimes and minor drug convictions of people who could possibly become productive citizens instead of just set on a path of perpetual incarceration at the taxpayers expense.

7. Colorado Springs has a stormwater fee of \$5 per home, and \$30 per acre for businesses. The current council members appear to be in favor of a fee increase and will likely increase it soon. Many of the violations ruled on in a recent EPA lawsuit found that the City failed to enforce requirements that construction site operators implement appropriate measures to prevent polluted stormwater from running off active construction sites. During your term, will you vote to raise the stormwater fee?

The stormwater fee is being proposed to increase \$3 over a three year period for residents and \$15 per month for commercial property including churches and non- profits. My expectation is that this will be voted on by the city council prior to my term beginning, which I disagree and believe, should be brought to the citizens for a vote. If passed, I will work to oversee best management practices so additional increases are rarely, if ever, required and we will see this not be a forever tax but a tax, that has an expiration. Currently, there are 71 stormwater projects in the works and once completed we should set a steady plan for maintaining and end the continued fee's.

8. Do you support or oppose the implementation of recreational marijuana within the City of Colorado Springs in order to capture additional tax revenue?

While in principle I agree with referring measures to voters, I am not in favor of this measure. Colorado Springs has a certain amount of recession proofing due to our close relationships with military bases and institutions that have made their concerns with recreational marijuana very clear. I see this measure being decided by whichever side has the most money to campaign for or against it, as such, I could not in good conscience support that. Our long term economic health and growth is too important.

9. There is a push in the City for separate affordable housing complexes. According to the National Association of Realtors, the average price of a home in Colorado Springs increased from \$175,000 to \$371,900 in 10 years. Wages have not kept up with that increase. What is your solution to help residents afford housing?

When I consider affordable housing, I look back to my own experiences as a single mother who paid half of her income to cover rent each month with a one year old child. I did it, but there was a lot of Ramen noodles and sacrifice involved. In Colorado Springs, I believe adding additional multi-family dwelling units, as well as, encouraging Community Partnerships that help young adults and families get into homes will help us grow into a position where rent or even a mortgage payment is not a hardship are both options are equally worth considering. If our infill opportunities are utilized to create not just apartments but mixed-space where home ownership can be achieved, this would be a wonderful step for families who are currently priced out of our market. Guarding against over regulation and giving developers the ability to create communities in a way that reduces unnecessary costs (like carrying loans for lengthy periods while waiting on final approvals) is one way to address this.

10. Is there anything else you want the taxpayers to know about you, or is there an important topic we didn't ask about that you want to share?

I am a small business owner and founder of a local non-profit and charter school. I believe that the government's strongest role is to provide the infrastructure and basic services without getting in the way of real economy drivers - our citizens.