

Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS®

February 27, 2023

Dear Ms. Neuharth,

On behalf of Texas REALTORS® and the Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS®, I commend you for seeking public office.

If you would like to be considered for Texas REALTORS® and TREPAC (Texas Association of REALTORS® Political Action Committee) support, please complete the Texas REALTORS® candidate questionnaire by **Friday, March 10th**.

If you do not return your questionnaire by this date, we will assume you do not want to be considered for TREPAC support.

This questionnaire serves as your introduction to our group, so answer all questions as you would in person, best reflecting your position on the issues. Your answers remain private, as all volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement prior to reviewing candidate questionnaires.

The Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS® would also like to meet with you for an in-person interview. Can we meet from 1:00 p.m.-1:25 p.m. on **Friday, March 17th** at 3805 W. University Dr. Denton?

After interviewing all candidates, the interview panel submits recommendations to the Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS® Board of Directors for approval. That board's decision will be sent to Texas REALTORS® and TREPAC Trustees for official consideration.

You will be notified as soon as the state association makes its final decisions.

We look forward to meeting you and working with you to ensure Texas remains a great place to buy, sell, and lease real estate.

Sincerely,

Lisa McEntire
Governmental Affairs Chair
940.230.0780
lisamcrealty@gmail.com

Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS® City Council Candidate Questionnaire

On behalf of more than 1300 members of the Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS®, we commend you for seeking office and appreciate you taking time to complete this questionnaire.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to establish an issue-based dialog between you and your local REALTOR® partners, as well as our clients who buy and sell real estate in our community.

Your responses to the questionnaire will not be made public, nor are they a litmus test for campaign support.

The Greater Denton/Wise County Association of REALTORS® appreciates your attention to this candidate questionnaire and is available to answer any questions. Feel free to contact us at 940-387-8212 or Nancy@gdwcar.com

We also work in strong partnership with the Texas REALTORS®, our state-level professional association. You may contact the Texas REALTORS® Governmental Affairs Department at 800-873-9155.

Candidate Information

Name of candidate: Stephanie Neuharth

Office sought: City of Denton Council - District 4

Political party (if applicable): Bi-Partisan Seat

Mailing address: 4316 Bay Meadow Dr, Denton, TX 76210

Phone number: _____ Mobile number: 702-498-0138

Email address: info@stephaniefordenton.com

Website: stephaniefordenton.com

Facebook: facebook.com/StephanieForDenton

Twitter: _____

Why are you running for office?

Denton is growing, it is inevitable. We do not have to lose "Denton" in that growth, however.

These next few years will shape Denton for decades. This means looking at our taxes, development

and staying ahead of the growth with our public services.

What are your three top priority issues?

1) Reducing the stress of taxes on homeowners.

2) Fully funding and training public service to ensure public safety is a priority.

3) Guiding Denton's growth and shaping it into a well thought out, intentional thriving economic city.

Briefly describe any current or previous community engagement or service you have done.

Mission Moms, supporting and providing food for food insecure students through the scheduled breaks.

Campaign Information

How much do you expect to spend in this race? \$25,000 - \$30,000

How much have you raised so far? Committed: 12,000 --- Recieved: \$3,000

Campaign manager: myself; however - I've been given a name of someone who will provide guidance but cannot take on an additional campaign right now

Campaign treasurer: myself

Campaign consultant(s): myself

Professional fundraiser: my husband. He has never raised for a campaign, but he's a professional syndicator and capital raiseses for multiple projects.

Campaign Information, cont.

Please briefly describe your plan to win this election, including your plans for fundraising, communicating, and identifying/turning out your voters.

Fundraising includes reaching out to a lot of my old colleagues who are in the political and philanthropic spaces and have committed to helping me with the financial resources. The biggest take-away is door-knocking. I'm committing to knock on doors, but many of my surrounding neighborhoods are already supportive. I will be hiring block-walkers and we hit the trail this week. I'm working on social media to engage those who otherwise don't realize there is a municipal election going on. I'm attending forums and HOA meetings. We're working on sending 3 mailers and doing weekly Meet and Greets.

What is your prior professional or community engagement with local REALTORS®?

I'm a loan officer with an independent brokerage and previous to that I was a processor / loan officer assistant. A few of my dearest friends are successful local Realtors.

If the <Local Association> decides to support your campaign, would you accept funds from our Texas Association of REALTORS® Political Action Committee (TREPAC)?

Answer: **Yes** **No**

Additional Comments:

I would love the opportunity to be endorsed by TREPAC and its members. Realtors are an integral part of our thriving community

REALTORS® are committed to our communities, our clients, and the public. We work to ensure private property rights are protected, and that Texans can buy, sell, lease, and enjoy real property. To accomplish those goals, we monitor and advocate on a wide variety of local, state, and federal policy issues. The following questions seek to understand your position as a candidate and potential lawmaker on issues that will impact housing and real estate within your jurisdiction.

Issue: Rental Registration

Background: Several cities across Texas have undertaken excessively restrictive measures on rental property in their communities in an effort to monitor landlords and generate local fee-driven revenues through rental property. Some of these actions are registration of rental property and the inspection of rental property, with permitting and other subsequent fees associated with these measures.

Question 1: Would you support or oppose proposals to enact a rental registration or rental property inspection fee?

Answer: **Support** **Oppose**

Explanation of Position:

This feels like overreach. My husband and I have several rental properties and to require inspecting and permitting including fees is...bad for business. To require it, would mean that those fees get passed onto the rentals, and one look at any local FB group, you'll see people are struggling as it is. I DO believe that renters should have some protections and live in a space that supports their health and safety and there can be a reporting process. If a renter feels something is not up to code, they should be able to have someone to submit that information to and then it could be reviewed. To require it on every property? I'm against that.

Issue: Short-term Rentals

Background: Short-term rentals, or vacation rentals, are typically defined as those rented for less than 30 consecutive days. These are typically single-family homes in neighborhoods of cities that are desirable to visitors.

Some cities have banned short-term rental use in their local development or zoning codes and others have limited the use under specific parameters or guidelines. Registration programs may be required for all short-term-rental owners or may be limited to those owners who exclusively rent their properties as an investment.

Question 2: Would you support or oppose banning short-term rental use in your city?

Answer: ✓ **Support**

Oppose

Explanation of Position:

Denton has a thriving University population, Friday night football games, cultural amenities and a thriving equestrian business.

We should review this as a possibility to allow. I'd need to see some statistics of cities similar to ours to see if there should be a registration process for that, when HOA's are involved, and if we need to cap the amount allowable to ensure our local residents

have a place to live. But overall, if the rental provide positive economic impacts to the city, does not burden the communities, it's worth looking at.

Question 3: Would you support or oppose requiring a registration process for owners of these properties?

Answer: **Support**

Oppose

Explanation of Position:

Before I can answer this, I'd need to see some data and statistics of other cities where it's working well and not working well.

Overall, I think it's a good idea to register the units for tracking and data analysis. How can we measure this sector if we're not monitoring it, or even know it exists? Where I see the "issues" are, will there be a fee? Will we consider a tourism tax? What stress does it place on police/fire?

Left unchecked can put some pressure on the community, but I say this knowing I'm looking into hosting my own AirBnB's, so what's a good place that protects the local neighborhoods and services and increases local business revenue, without burdening the owners.

Issue: Property Taxes

Background: Creating a budget and adopting a property tax rate to support that budget are major functions of locally elected officials in Texas.

In simple terms, the Texas property tax system is based on an equation that multiplies a property's appraised value by locally adopted tax rates. In recent years, Texans have seen skyrocketing property tax bills due to rapid increases in appraised value and little or no change in their tax rates. In addition, over the last decade, many local taxing jurisdictions have seen their budgets increase over 60%, far outpacing the rate of inflation and population growth.

When appraisal values increase, taxing jurisdictions can hold the line by adopting a tax rate that guarantees no new revenue will be realized from existing properties, instead relying on new or improved properties to generate new revenue. (Formerly known as the "effective tax rate," new property tax laws resulting from Senate Bill 2 from the 86th Texas Legislature will rename this the "no-new-revenue maintenance and operations rate.")

Some taxing entities assert that if they do not change or even lower tax rates, but taxpayers' overall bills go up due to an increase in the appraised value of the property, this does not constitute a property tax increase.

Question 4: If a property owner's tax bill goes up, does that constitute a tax increase?

Answer: ✓ Yes No

Explanation of Position:

That's splitting hairs if I've ever seen it. An increase is an increase, no matter how you word it. People purchase their homes with an expectation and ability to repay based on what is provided to them. An inflationary market should not put them in a position to lose their homes because the appraised value of the home increased. In today's market - homeowners insurance is also skyrocketing. It's a lose-lose for our neighbors.

Legislative bodies need to understand that most people do not live in their home for more than 7 years. I'd completely support the Effective Tax Rate bill. People are ok with the tax rate when they purchase a home and understand what they're signing up for. What unsettles them is when they're hit with surprise bills because of a market they're not participating in. Knowing that they move approximately every 7 years, will even out the rate if budgeted correctly.

Question 5: Do you support increased transparency measures, including (but not limited to) better notifications and explanations of terms, to ensure property owners fully understand why their property tax bill increases or decreases, and would you work to implement such changes in your city?

Answer: ✓ Yes No

Explanation of Position:

My position in every job I've ever held has been based on transparency and education. When people understand what is going on they can effectively make choices or choose to participate when they didn't realize they had that option. Changing someone's outlook both positively and negatively is directly correlated to how well they understand something and the butterfly effect of those changes. The era of social media has skyrocketed with the need for transparency and authenticity. The most successful and highest paid accounts are focused on financial education. It's because people are watching and learning. Then they're re-watching and absorbing. Then they're implementing. Staying ahead of the misconceptions is pivotal.

Question 6: While considering the relationship between local taxing jurisdictions (city, county, or school district) and the Central Appraisal District, what role do you feel the Chief Appraiser/Central Appraisal District should play in the budgeting process for your city?

I need to see more data on this. It's obviously a gigantic source of revenue for our city, but it's also a strain in this market.

I'd welcome information on reviewing this process. The city relies on the money collected for this as part of its budget, but the Appraisal District also needs operating income. I would be open to reviewing the relationship on how these entities work together, understand the process and where money is allocated. That's a decision that would need careful thought and consideration as this department relies on subject matter experts.

Issue: Local Homestead Exemption

Question 7: Currently, local taxing jurisdictions have the ability to grant local property owners an exemption for their homesteads. Do you favor the local homestead exemption for your taxing jurisdiction as a way of providing property tax relief?

Answer: **Yes** **No**

Explanation of Position:

The city will still make this revenue up. Homestead applies to the principal residence, and when someone lives in the area, they pour their money back into the city by participating in the local amenities.

Issue: Appraisal Caps

Background: Currently, Texas has a 10% cap on the increase in assessed values for residential homesteads. Several proposals in the Texas Legislature would artificially cap property appraisals at 3% or 5% annually or extend the appraisal cap to commercial and industrial property. Further, some of these proposals would allow local-option elections that would allow for appraisal caps on a local level.

Question 8: Would you support efforts to lower the appraisal cap at the local level and/or extend the appraisal cap to commercial and industrial property?

Answer: **Yes** **No**

Explanation of Position:

I'd need to see more numbers, but in general this is a good idea. I found this artificial cap pretty confusing during the last appraisal cycle because for the first time in years did it really even apply and this seemed to be a pretty general consensus. I really think applying the effective tax rate would be better / almost the same. In assuming people move every 7 years, that by the time some properties catch up, the municipalities can make up for it at one time, rather than slowly collecting. Additionally, this would reduce the amount of hours it takes for the residents who are filing to contest. I'd support looking at the numbers to see how much time goes into re-evaluating every year, receiving the rebuttals, reviewing, etc. The amount of money and time saved may make the 'long-game' worth it.

Issue: Eminent Domain

Question 9: What is your opinion on the use of eminent domain and in what instances should a local government utilize the power of eminent domain?

Public use like highways and streets, I'd likely be for. If there is a way to redirect that provides the least amount of impact for all parties

I would prefer to see that option, instead.

There has been a lot of conversation regarding the universities and eminent domain, and I'm mixed depending on the intent for use.

I don't really consider universities as 'public' use. When someone must apply, be accepted, and then PAY to attend, that's not public. If they needed to increase housing or classrooms, it would need to be looked at. If they're adding restaurants or income generating services

specific to catering to the university population, that's not good use for the intent of being 'public'.

Issue: Taxes and the Economy

Question 10: In times of economic downturn, what measures do you propose for your city (i.e., tax rate increase, specific cuts in services, etc.)?

We live in a unique city where there are 3 major components that have to work together for the city to function. Any misbalance in these items would cause a ripple effect. It would be an overgeneralization to have a focal point of balance redistribution because every sector is necessary to perform a function of the city. Therefore, we'd need to review the budget on a macro scale to see where the burden could be spread or thinned out so as not to tip the scale. It takes too long to recover from that and would be more financially impactful in the long run than to strategically place boundaries in multiple sectors.

Issue: Energy-Efficiency Standards at Point of Sale

Background: Some city councils have proposed to mandate certain energy-efficiency upgrades in residential properties which must be completed and certified prior to the sale of the property. These mandates would require all properties to be retrofitted to meet the standards of the mandates, costing sellers thousands of dollars.

Question 11: If elected, would you support efforts to impose mandatory energy-efficiency upgrades in existing housing?

Answer: **Yes** **No**

Explanation of Position:

I'm going down the middle on this one depending on what the item is and how old the property is. I don't believe that a house from the 60s should

confirm to 60s standards in every aspect. If the original windows are still on there and single pane, the proper measures should be implemented. That house has increased its value exponentially since the original sale point, but I also understand that it may have changed hands 10 times and the current owner may not necessarily have that kind of equity or value in the home.

I'd like to see some safety and efficiency standards implemented. A house with single pane windows uses close to 20-25% more energy so I'd like to see the numbers regarding the ROI of those improvements and how it affects the energy processing plants and opportunities for grants or rebates on upgrading.

Candidate Comments

