

2016 Candidate Questionnaire

SECTION I

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Matt		Larson

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

State House of Representative, Position 2, District 5

3. Are you the incumbent? Yes No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

17 years

5. How long have you resided in King County?

28 years

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan? Partisan Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party: **Democrat**

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name: Friends of Matt Larson

Address: 7829 Center Blvd. SE, #187

City/State/Zip: Snoqualmie, WA 98065

Campaign Phone: 425-444-3596

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POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)
Mayor of the City of Snoqualmie	Elected (strong)	01/2006 to present	Elected by peers in 36 cities to serve as 2015 President of Sound Cities Association
Snoqualmie City Council, pos. 1	Elected	01/2002 thru 12/2005	Elected by peers to serve as Mayor Pro-tem 2004 and 2005
Snoqualmie City Planning Commission and Parks Board	Appointed	1999 1999 to 12/2001	Elected by peers to Chair of PC

2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run

SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
 - **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
 - **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
 - **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?
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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

I chose to run because I have a proven record of being a pragmatic problem solver due to my ability and desire to work effectively with diverse interest groups. I believe that politics is an essential and virtuous endeavor. It is about doing the hard work to solve the difficult challenges of our time. I find nothing to be more purposeful and meaningful than being part of improving the lives of the children and families in my community. I have had the honor of doing so for the past 14 years and I look forward to doing the same for the children and families of District 5.

More specifically, I wish to focus on advancing long neglected transportation investments on SR18, Hobart Rd., SR169 and the pending impacts of growth in Black Diamond and the region. This can also be mitigated by providing more affordable housing options throughout east and southeast King County so that working families can afford to live closer to their places of work. The growth of families in the 5th District will also require more investments in public safety, parks, community centers, family service providers, and schools. I also feel passionate about protecting the spectacular recreational and natural environment in my District.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

There are several life experiences that informed my character and provided me with traits that have served me well in public service.

First, my father spent a career in the Air Force and my mom was a registered nurse. While our family often lacked the finer things in life, I admired that my parents lived very meaningful and purposeful lives dedicated to serving something greater than themselves. I aspire to live by their example.

Second, from the age of five, I grew up in a large military family moving around the country and world. This formative experience had two very powerful and positive influences on my life. It taught me to deeply appreciate diversity by exposing me to many cultures, beliefs, foods, climates, people, places, landscapes, history, etc. And, it taught me optimism, humility and courage by helping me lose my fears of the unfamiliar and of change. In addition, I was one of six kids. By necessity, individuals living in large families tend to become quite adept at negotiating workable compromises with one another so as to live in relative peace.

Third, I was a Theology major in college and I spent five years working as a Youth Director for a large junior and senior high program. I also spent several years working as a home designer (residential architect). As a result of this unique combination, I have the ability to dive into the complex details of a problem as well as the ability to form and articulate a broader vision and plan.

Lastly, according to my peers, I play well with others by giving voice and focus to group efforts. Within months of joining the Planning Commission, my peers elected me to serve as Chair. During my first year on City Council, my peers elected me to serve as Mayor Pro-tem. And, while mayor, my local city peers elected me to serve as President of the Snoqualmie Valley Governments Association and, last year, my peers in our 36 neighboring cities elected me to serve as President of the Sound Cities Association.

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

- 1. 25 years ago, while serving as a youth director, I became involved in a case advocating on behalf of a family whose son had been sexually abused by a Catholic priest. It was one of the most painful chapters in my life. The situation often put me in an adversarial role with the very institution that I loved and served. I lost several close friends over the matter and often thought of abandoning the case and surrendering to bitterness and cynicism. Yet, after several years of effort, the case was resolved with the priest admitting to his crimes and Pope Benedict stripping him of his collar (priesthood). Too often, individuals and organizations, including governments can be blind to their own institutionalized biases and prejudices. This experience taught me some very powerful lessons in patience, humility, perseverance and the need to constantly and deeply re-examine my own prejudices, motives and biases. It also severely tested my resolve to live by my core principles and beliefs.**
- 2. 11 years ago, when I ran for mayor, the city staff often quietly and cynically joked that our local government was bicameral. Due to a complex series of events and political influences, we had the "City of Snoqualmie" (answering to the city administrator) and the "City of Public Safety" (which answered to the police chief). Needless to say, this caused many organizational, ethical and financial conflicts and serious problems with accountability and transparency. In alliance with a couple of council members, I took on this very divisive issue in my campaign and corrected it after I won. Needless to say, I was often vilified by those wishing to protect the status quo. Yet, due to my experience 25 years ago, I committed to pursuing these needed changes without being self-righteous, or judging and attacking the**

character and motives of those involved. For that reason, I am now on very good terms with those who defended the status quo at the time and most now acknowledged that things were “really messed up”.

3. **During my tenure as mayor, councilmember and planning commissioner, I worked effectively with my peers and the City staff to oversee the most transformational period in Snoqualmie’s history due to the planning, development, and pending completion of the Snoqualmie Ridge Master Planned Community. Snoqualmie’s population grew from 1,600 in 1998 to over 13,000 today. This growth involved the building of nearly 4,000 new homes, 38 new city parks, 29 miles of trails, a new police and new fire station, new public works facilities, a new City Hall, a new KCLS Library, a new community center and the addition of significant new city infrastructure. After years of determined effort, that required me to work collaboratively with the City Council and Northwest Railway Museum, the rebuilding and revitalization of the historic downtown was successfully and significantly completed. In 2015, Money Magazine selected Snoqualmie as #5 for “Best Places to Live in America”.**

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

Family

In 1997, my wife and I adopted a 10 month old boy and eight year old girl from Russia. In 2000 we went back and adopted a six year old boy and met a seven year old girl we later adopted in 2003 at age 10. Nothing causes one to re-examine all of life's priorities more quickly than assuming complete responsibility for the welfare of a small child who has experienced profound tragedy in early childhood. Each of our children (now 26, 23, 21 and 19) challenged and inspired us in ways we never imagined. As an example, the Russian educators and doctors diagnosed and openly described our oldest daughter using the Russian word for "retarded"—even in her presence-- shortly after she was found abandoned in the streets at age four. Over the years, we encouraged her as she tenaciously struggled to catch up with her peers; day by day, month after month. She often had to work five times harder to simply accomplish average. In 2004, her years of effort were completely vindicated when she graduated from St. Martin's University. She now lives on her own working as an assistant at a law firm in Seattle. The experience of raising my kids has taught me a great deal about understanding the needs and profound value of properly investing in, early childhood development, education, mental health, substance abuse treatments and criminal justice system reform.

Community

When I first joined the Snoqualmie City Council, the relationship between the Northwest Railway Museum (NRM) and the City were toxic. This situation made any hope of ever revitalizing the tired and worn historic downtown nearly impossible. Once I was elected Mayor Pro-tem, I created a new position of liaison to the museum and volunteered for the role. When I first showed up for NRM Board meetings I was greeted with deep suspicion and distrust. I made clear that my only agenda was to learn about their dreams, goals and aspirations for the museum. As the year went by, the ice began to thaw and they became more intensely interested in the City's (often common) goals. Within two years, we entered into a complex land swap deal that provided the NRM a four acre campus upon which they built several structures designed to restore and protect valuable historical artifacts. By partnering with the City, the museum successfully attracted over \$12 million of Federal, State and County grants. Assisted by our recently completed downtown reconstruction project, the NRM is quickly on its way to becoming a world class railway museum.

When I first became mayor, I established a fiscal policy to set aside 1% of our projected revenues each year to quadruple our support and funding for several social service agencies in the Valley. I was also instrumental in negotiating a deal with the Snoqualmie Tribe that provided \$100,000 each year for human services. This money is used by our new Snoqualmie Community Center/YMCA to assure that no child or family is ever turned away due to cost. In 2012, I was selected as Elected Official of the Year by the Alliance of Eastside Agencies which consists of 40 human service organizations located throughout east King County.

Public Life

See attached resume.

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

Per Article IX of our State Constitution, “it is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders...”.

My primary duty as a state legislator is to *protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Washington State* by approving a state budget and, by creating, amending and repealing laws to achieve this end. (Education does improve the mental health, safety and future welfare of our children.)

All other duties are in service to those above. Other duties include, spending time listening to the constituents in my district. Spending time with numerous educational and community organizations, labor interests, business interests, environmental interests, city interests, etc.

After 14 years of public service, I believe passionately about finding a healthy balance of priorities and investments in all aspects of community life. When I served on the City Council I endeavored to learn as much as I could about ALL aspects of city operations from sewer treatment plants to police and fire concerns. I believe that a well-balanced legislator should endeavor to be a good generalist and not a specialist. Specialized expertise can be provided by professional staff. Legislators should continually learn about and tend to the complete and complex milieus in which our citizens live. From the moment they wake up, our citizens interact with housing, utilities, food, roads, the environment, schools, and places of work, recreation and worship. They serve, play, rely upon and work with one another. Neglect one area of their lives and other areas suffer as well.