

Candidate Questionnaire

Introduce yourself: (please provide your name, how long you have lived in Reile's Acres, Occupation, etc...)

Hello neighbors! My name is Jason Eblen, and I am running to be our community's next mayor. I appreciate this opportunity to share some information about myself and appreciate your investment in our community's future by giving the time to read these candidate questionnaires. I grew up in Hillsboro, ND, and moved to Reile's Acres in 2006. My wife and I love this community so much that we built our forever home here and moved two blocks north in 2019. We have two grown children. I have a long history of volunteering and working in Emergency Medical Services. The first half of my professional career was as a paramedic for 20 years and I continue to volunteer serving our community as a paramedic today. I currently work as a Customer Success Manager for a US based international emergency services software company where my primary responsibility is running the data & record management system for Washington, DC, Fire. & EMS. In addition to my primary role, I also manage complex customer escalations that require bringing together multidisciplinary international teams to resolve.

What inspired you to run for office, and what qualifications or experiences have helped you prepare for this role?

I have always had a desire to serve others. As I was considering career options, I developed an interest in health care. I worked as a CNA taking care of elderly nursing home patients & volunteered as a first responder on our local ambulance service. After high school, I simultaneously attended and earned degrees from NDSU & Bismarck State College. As a lifelong learner, I appreciate the value in celebrating success along with learning from failure. Pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone allows you to see things from other perspectives, challenges your own thinking, and most importantly, educates you.

As a Resident Assistant in college for 2.5 years I developed skills in team building, community development, mediation, conflict resolution, and navigating tricky situations. I volunteered as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff for three years shortly after college where I also learned invaluable skills in working through difficult situations.

While working professionally at F-M Ambulance, I moved through the ranks from being a paramedic, to a crew leader, a field training officer, and a charge medic. I was on thousands of emergency responses, working to help others in their worst times. I was elected as a union steward for multiple terms and subsequently as our union's president where I served until moving to an administrative role. In the steward and president role, I was frequently challenged with viewing two sides of difficult situations and working to find common ground. I understood that both the company and our members had views, needs, and concerns. Working to find common ground to advance mutual interests helped to move our organizations forward. During the flood of 2009, I was one of two individuals who served as a staging officer responsible for managing and tracking the operations of hundreds of ambulances while we evacuated several health facilities in Fargo-Moorhead. After working in operations, I pursued an administrative role where I worked as a Clinical Learning & Development Specialist. I was responsible for staff, policy, and protocol development along with quality improvement & quality assurance

functions. These efforts were directed to ensure safe, quality, effective patient care at numerous ambulance services operated by Sanford Health. I was a founding member of the SIM-ND. This grant funded opportunity brought advanced simulation & training opportunities to rural hospitals & ambulance services, improving care delivery in rural areas. I also served to develop systems of care and worked to advance rural EMS connectivity and capabilities bringing telehealth and other opportunities to rural ambulance services.

I was elected to serve multiple terms on the ND EMS Association Board of Directors. The association serves to advance, strengthen, and improve EMS care within North Dakota. We hold a seat at the table where policies and protocols affecting EMS care in the state are formed. Being able to advance our capabilities and improve patient outcomes was one of the more rewarding aspects of this position.

For the past 10 years, I have volunteered as a paramedic with Harwood Fire & Rescue where I continue to serve. I am currently in my third elected term as the Secretary on our Board of Directors. Our medical response area includes Reile's Acres. We work with multiple other agencies and government entities to provide safe and effective emergency care and response. It is a true privilege to serve our community in this role.

Each summer I run the staffing and operations for the USA Wrestling Cadet & Junior National Wrestling Tournament held at the FargoDome. I have worked at this event for the past 29 years. The event brings over 5,000 wrestlers along with hundreds of volunteers, coaches, families, and other guests to our community. It is a weeklong event that has a multi-million-dollar economic impact on our local economy.

As I shared before, I am a lifelong learner. I am passionate about advocating for those who cannot do so for themselves. To me, there are few things more rewarding than serving others, putting their interests ahead of your own, and working to make our world a better place through mutual respect, transparency, & shared understanding. My career has involved making decisions which may or may not be easy but are in the best interests of others. I really believe that one should do unto others as you wish they should do unto you.

Finally, one of my inspirations in pursuing this role is my father. He is currently serving his 10th elected term as a county commissioner in Traill County. I have had the privilege of watching him & learning from him in that role through both good and challenging times. I cannot help but think he has been an amazing role model for elected service and must be doing something right having been elected to ten four-year terms.

How do you plan to cultivate a sense of community and belonging among residents in Reile's Acres?

Transparent leadership, open dialogue, and shared decision making are core traits of my leadership style. Everyone has a role and voice in shaping our community and its future. Elected leaders are there to make decisions in the best overall interests of their community. In EMS, when the number of patients at an event exceeds your capability to provide care, you go into a process called triage. It is doing the greatest good for the greatest number, even when some decisions can be painful. That is a necessary capability for the council members and mayor to

have. Decisions should be made with doing the greatest good for the greatest number in mind. When things are difficult, we need to look at situations through multiple lenses to make transparent, shared, informed decisions in the best interests of those affected, even if that is contrary to our own personal interests or agenda. To that end, I am also a firm believer in sharing both the good and the bad. It is important to foster a positive image of our community, but it is also OK to admit we may not be perfect. Mistakes and missteps are no fun, but we should not run or hide from them. We should embrace & learn from them. That is what really makes us better.

I would like to make it easier for our residents to learn about our city and the decision made by the council. A quick simple item would be to record council meetings and make them available for public consumption. While we can still learn from minutes, Facebook posts, and conversations with others, seeing what happened serves to level the playing field, if you will, and let everyone see the same information the same way.

I think it would be fantastic to welcome and introduce new members of our community, with their permission of course, through the city's Facebook group and through other mechanisms such as regular email updates for those that may not be into social media. We should continue to hold events such as regular picnics and other activities that bring people together.

What do you feel sets Reile's Acres apart from other cities in the Fargo/Moorhead metro?

Reile's is small but mighty. It is a wonderful small town feel yet we are so close to the amenities & conveniences of "the metro" when needed. We have a true small-town vibe, nice spacious room to live in, & easy access to resources. We are proud of our city and a lot of people not only live here but when they are ready to move, they do what we did and move to a new place here in the same city. What can be a better indicator of how special this place is? We are a nice, connected community that does not have to live uncomfortably close to each other. We appreciate the small-town life with access to larger city amenities while having a favorable property tax situation compared to some of our bigger city neighbors. One can truly stretch their dollar here. Reile's is one of the best kept secrets of our area.

What do you feel are the top three challenges facing our city, and what specific plans do you have to address them if elected?

Our biggest challenge is our neighboring cities getting closer and closer. We could say that we are not going to let that happen to us, but the reality of the situation is that this is happening today. This is not an indictment but an acknowledgement of what is happening. We do not have to look far to see our neighboring community creeping up on our doorsteps to the south, east, and northeast. We need to be good neighbors, but we need to advocate for ourselves and pursue our interests. Reaching out to other communities who have or are experiencing the same can provide valuable lessons. To me a leader is not an expert in a topic because they were elected. They are leaders because they choose to make consistent & informed decisions. Educating yourself, leaning on external experts and resources when needed, helps you make well informed, open, & transparent decisions.

Tied together with the concern above is safety & security. As we become close to the metro, we have seen the accompanying quality of life issues slowly making their way in our direction. It is no stretch of the imagination that we have increased traffic in our area, especially with commercial traffic. With the New Haven addition now going into full swing, we can expect some of the same to continue, along with the usual increase in burglary at construction sites. These safety concerns are likely to become more regular occurrences. We should not run and hide from this, but rather embrace the reality of the situation. It is appropriate to be concerned about and take measures to maintain an excellent quality of life. There has been a lot of talk and communication about the recent hiring of a ½ time deputy to patrol our community. People are on both sides of the issue. I see it as a potential benefit both as a deterrent and a protective mechanism. Increased commercial vehicle traffic on 45th Street has the potential to become a painfully expensive problem. The old saying in medicine is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This saying really applies to our current situation. We can and hopefully will benefit from the investment in partnering with our Sheriff's department. Traffic has been a popular topic of late. Some think it is a problem, some do not, and it's good to hear from both sides. To me, it comes down to mutual understanding, shared respect for each other, and just following the rules of the road. Even if people travelling through our community do not respect it like we might, let us be good neighbors, follow the rules of the road, and by doing so, respect each other. We may also benefit from a simple traffic trailer with speed measuring. There are reasonably priced options out there that measure and record traffic volumes and speeds. Investing in such a tool could be incredibly valuable in focusing the efforts of our contracted deputy on problem times and areas.

Maintaining our community's feel and way of life is a third top priority for me. We are getting uncomfortably close to becoming Prairie Rose or Frontier. My personal view is that our best path forward to maintaining our community feel is to pursue growth in the directions that we can. We should continue being good neighbors but look to further our footprint and feel. To me there is only two directions to go.... north and west. It is my understanding that our city leadership has historically had a vision to continue growing north. It is also my understanding that our neighbors on 47th and 45th streets north of Cass 20 have not looked at this favorably. These folks are our neighbors, and we should be welcoming them into our community. Much like most of us may not want to get surrounded by Fargo or West Fargo, our neighbors may feel the same about us. We need to work hard with our residential and agricultural neighbors to see if we can find a mutual path forward. Being a union steward and president taught me an invaluable lesson that negotiations are rarely fun, they quite frankly sometimes stink, but at the end of the day if we can both give and get, both sides can walk away stronger together. Our city could really benefit by taking the same approach with our neighbors.

Why should voters consider you the most qualified candidate for this position?

I have a demonstrated history of servant leadership making open, transparent, and informed decisions. An incredibly important part of making an informed decision is doing so in a consistent manner in accordance with existing ordinance or applicable law. I am a strong believer in listening to others & having several voices at the table. Different viewpoints help us see things we might not have otherwise seen and make sure we consider any applicable information. Serving in the mayor's role is about listening to the citizens you serve, learning from and trusting your fellow council members, and really taking a minute to make sure other

viewpoints are considered. It is also about learning from our mistakes. Leaders should not dwell on the past, but it is important to look back on our decisions and make sure we are headed in the direction they were intended to send us. I have lived a life of service in positions where the decisions I have had to make have significant impacts on other people's lives. I take that very seriously and have done that every day with the intention of holding the interests of others over my own. I intend to do the same if elected.

Being elected to several boards & serving in leadership positions has given me the tools to be successful in this role. Many of these roles have served to develop my abilities to work through difficult and challenging situations. Our community has several of these in our road ahead. We need to protect our interests and work hard to address these concerns in a transparent, collegial, and informed manner. I am not in it for me, I am in it for you, I am in it for us. It really goes back to doing unto others as you would have them do unto you by being consistent and treating each other fair and just.

If you made it this far, thanks for reading! I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to connect & I hope you learned a bit about me. I encourage you to participate in our civic process and vote for what you feel is best for our community. All the best!