

## **CAWA Questionnaire**

### **1. The Asian American community in Naperville is very diverse. In your current or past business or public roles, what involvement have you had with the Asian American community?**

During my time as a City Council member much of my involvement with the Asian American community has been my work with Naperville Neighbors United (now a non-profit 501C3), an organization I began in early 2019. As the founder, my aim was to bring different communities together, listen to their concerns and experiences, and have courageous conversations about those issues.

One of the many programs that NNU sponsored that featured Asian American issues was held on May 7, 2020, called "Combating Anti-Asian American Bias during the COVID-19 Outbreak." A year later, on April 21, 2021, NNU presented "A Discussion on Anti-Asian Discrimination." That panel included Nancy Chen and three employees of the City of Naperville, Robert Lee (Deputy Chief of Investigations of the Naperville Police Department), Jackie Nguyen (Director of Information Technology) and Dr. Geneace Williams (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager).

NNU has also co-hosted several bystander training sessions about how to assist when racist incidents occur. One of those sessions involved collaborating with Asian Americans Advancing Justice. The COVID-19 pandemic brought forward examples of racist behavior that showed how even a community like Naperville, which we might think is progressive and multicultural, is subject to overt examples of racism that can't be dismissed as one-offs. Later that year (Sept. 26, 2021) NNU sponsored an outdoor Multicultural Day at Rotary Hill, featuring a number of Asian American performers and groups.

Prior to becoming a City Councilman, I was on the District 204 School Board, where I attended PDAC (Parent Diversity Advisory Council) meetings and collaborated with their leadership. While I was on the School Board, we hired our first Director of Educational Equity. We were one of the first in the state to establish this role. Not too long after that District 203 created a similar position.

When I was on the School Board, and now that I am on the City Council, I always prioritized attending cultural and outreach events when I am invited, because I learn a lot. I am awed and inspired by the diversity of our city.

### **2. How do you define "diversity, equity and inclusion"? What specific steps would you take as mayor to include Asian Americans in Naperville's DEI activities in relation to city employment, contracts, and appointments?**

I was instrumental in adding the "diversity, equity, and inclusion" language to our city's mission statement. This was a personal priority for me. The change to the mission statement was made in 2019 after Naperville had suffered several incidents that showed that racism was still being demonstrated in our town. Our mission statement now reads that we work "To provide services that ensure a high quality of life, sound

fiscal management, and a dynamic business environment, while creating an inclusive community that values diversity." I take that very seriously.

When I began the organization Naperville Neighbors United, our board was very aware that we needed to address the concerns of the diverse Asian American community. That became very apparent during the pandemic, when our East Asian residents in particular experienced being blamed for COVID, including an incident on the Riverwalk that was captured on video. Naperville Neighbors United hosted Zoom events during the pandemic, and one very well-attended one was specifically about expressions of prejudice directed against the East Asian community, which included members of our Naperville community and employees of the City of Naperville, one of whom is Korean-American and another Vietnamese-American.

Representation is important. The Mayor and Council of Naperville only hire our City Manager and do not directly hire any employees. But they do provide important input on the professional leadership of the City. It's important to work with community leaders to convey information about hiring practices, job openings, and opportunities to sit on volunteer boards. I believe that one of the Mayor's more important jobs, appointing citizens to our boards and commissions, should be much more transparent and there should be an effort to represent groups who may have been overlooked in the past. Anyone who is appointed to a board or commission should be someone who believes in our City's mission statement.

**3. What issues or concerns do you believe have a particular or distinct impact on Asian Americans? How do you plan to address them as Mayor of Naperville?**

As Mayor, I will continue to be intentional about reaching out to our Asian American residents. I will listen to the community, encouraging listening sessions with various Asian American community groups, whether they are business, cultural, or social. CAWA is a great example of a group that can provide very useful input for the Mayor.

I would encourage the AAPI community to invite city officials to their community events not just for celebrations (which are wonderful) but also to discuss topics that are particularly important and timely. In turn, the Mayor can help groups understand the resources that are available in the City. For instance, the Police Department encourages residents who have experienced instances of discrimination to report them as soon as possible and will work with the victims.

If an incident occurs that requires an immediate response (like the Buffalo Wild Wings incident, or the Riverwalk incident), then the Mayor should have respected contacts within various communities to reach out to who can assist in understanding how these incidents affect our residents. Let the Mayor and the City know if communication is an issue and if online or printed resources need to be translated.

We need to remember that part of making our community feel safe is not just feeling safe from crime, but feeling welcomed and valued.

**4. Mayor Chirico recently stated that a fourth marijuana dispensary may be a possibility in Naperville. What is your position on a fourth dispensary, and do you believe the existing dispensaries have served Naperville residents better, worse or as expected?**

Like many of the City's residents, at first, I had some misgivings about locating dispensaries in Naperville. By limiting the number and carefully locating them we have avoided the problems seen in some other states. Fortunately, despite the fears that some of our residents had that cannabis dispensaries would lead to an increase in crime in Naperville, this has not happened. The existing dispensaries have been following the state's very strict rules. They have served the residents much better than expected. State law prevents people under the age of 21 from purchasing tobacco, vaping products, alcohol, or cannabis. We have not had any incidents of underage purchase of cannabis that I am aware of. At this time, I don't believe we should add a fourth dispensary. The existing dispensaries are already providing a substantial amount of local tax income (well over a million dollars per year), which reduces the tax burden on our homeowners. There has not been any increase in crime as a result of dispensaries being located in Naperville.