
[External] Application for City Council Member – Ward 2 [#24]

From Wufoo <no-reply@wufoo.com>

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To City Clerk <City_Clerk@longmontcolorado.gov>

Name *	Sarah Levison
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How long have you been a resident in Longmont? *	since July 1997
Current occupation: *	Community volunteer

Why are you interested in serving as a City Council Member? *

Since the day we found a house in Longmont, I have felt compelled to give back to the community that is our home. I want to serve as the City Council Member from Ward 2 to help the residents of Longmont and Ward 2 thrive as I and my family have.

I would like to serve with the current city council, as the appointed council member for Ward 2, because I feel my experience as a past council member and currently as a community volunteer for a wide range of organizations will help me to be effective immediately. My schedule allows me to devote many hours each week to fulfill all of the duties of a council member. I can bring a fresh perspective as a new council member. I will work together in the spirit of teamwork and authentic collaboration with each council member and the Mayor to accomplish the goals of this council. The most pressing issues the council is working on – housing, tough budget decisions, quiet zones, transportation, high cost of and lack of childcare options, diversity, equity and inclusion, homelessness and declining civic engagement are all issues that the councils I served with from 2007 to 2015 faced. It is this experience, which is still current, that I feel will make me a good choice to serve with this council. Serving the people of Longmont has been the most rewarding part of my life. I would greatly appreciate being appointed to the Ward 2 seat so I can once again serve the city that has given me and my family so much

Briefly explain what you believe are the two most important issues facing City Council and how do you believe those issues should be addressed? *

I believe the two most important issues facing City Council are housing and civic engagement.

The housing challenge facing the City Council is not isolated to Longmont. It is a national issue. While the city council is trying to facilitate the construction of more housing, there are economic forces that are raising the cost of housing that cannot be controlled by the city or the city council.

The city council in 2011 repealed the Inclusionary Zoning ordinance. I was part of that council but vigorously opposed ending the IZ ordinance. At that time, the council majority allowed those owners to opt out of their deed restriction. As a result, the City of Longmont lost what were permanently affordable ownership opportunities. The tens of thousands of dollars invested in fee waivers, permit costs and cash from the Affordable Housing fund were lost. I thank the Council for not only bringing back a new Inclusionary Zoning ordinance in 2018 but also helping to jump start more affordable housing opportunities.

Going forward, the city will have to balance how much it can afford in incentives, density bonuses as well as foster good design and compatibility of the new buildings. I have a couple of suggestions that council can consider be added to the current policy that can help with home ownership affordability.

First, the Longmont Housing Authority or another non profit entity could create a Community Land Trust. Thistle is a CLT however, they only have the Blue Vista project in Longmont. The Trust could purchase the land, or a developer can donate the land to the nonprofit. The land value is separated from the value of the improvement. This makes a home more affordable because it reduces the cost to purchase because the owner is only buying the improvement, not the land. As the cost of land continues to rise, it becomes a higher percentage of the assessed value. The owner will permanently be protected from the rise in land value and pay reduced property taxes as a result. Long term affordability is sustained when property taxes are stabilized.

Another idea is to allow a higher amount of assets or savings. Although the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development sets the limit of assets, Longmont could find a work around to allow individuals and families to exceed the limit. If qualifying for an affordable home means disregarding sound personal financial strategies, such as having enough savings, the goals of the program to empower lower income people to achieve stability and financial success will never be achieved. This idea needs further study.

The second most important issue for the City Council is civic engagement. It seems the city is expecting the other half of civic engagement (residents, businesses and visitors) to show up and participate in the manner in which the city wants them to engage. The council may want to go with a more focused approach such as meeting people where they are in their neighborhood, school or other locations where the interaction is more casual. The key is to have excellent follow up to any questions or topics that were brought up.

How does the Council get more people to participate?

The Council should fund a new line in the Capital Improvement Program budget for new and innovative ideas to improve our public infrastructure. Currently, we have a Neighborhood Improvement fund that is a competitive grant fund available to registered neighborhoods under the Neighborhood Group Leaders Association. Why not open up an opportunity to get new ideas from all of our residents?

Here is how it would work. Anyone who has an idea for a capital project can make a proposal that would be judged in a competition. City staff, council members and other community leaders would work with the competitors to mentor them to present a great proposal. I am thinking of a mashup of The Voice and Shark Tank.

Will it work? Yes. I saw a similar competition when I was visiting a Chicago alderman who invited the residents of his district to use some of his allocation of the CIP by proposing projects. In Chicago, the neighborhood decided on which project was funded. This is the type of positive civic engagement we could have in Longmont. The city will engage people about the budget process and will also get good projects the community is invested in.

Lastly, the city council could convene our nonprofits, faith community, civic organizations and even sports leagues in a partnership to engage people in any part of civic life that appeals to them. Attending a city event or responding to a city survey will not tell the council what is needed or what people are looking for. A survey of those who

attended a city event or saw the invitation to fill out a survey on the city's website does not give us a broad sample.

Finally, the council and the city government and our other organizations need to get our youth to help us see new perspectives and discover new solutions. Our youth did an excellent job evaluating how the "Bronco Bucks" would be spent. Let us help us with civic engagement that will be meaningful.

Letter of Interest *



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Resume (Optional)



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Signature *

Sarah S. Levison

Date *

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

Sarah S. Levison
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January 8, 2025

Mayor Peck and the Longmont City Council
350 Kimbark Street
Longmont, CO 80501

Dear Mayor Peck and Council members Crist, Hidalgo-Faring, McCoy, Rodriguez and Yarbrough,

This letter of interest is written as part of my application to fill the Ward 2 city council seat. I am asking for your vote to serve Ward 2 and the City of Longmont.

I served as a council member at large from November 2007 until November 2015. Following my council terms, I have continued to grow, learn and serve the community. I feel my years off the council have given me a new perspective which is beneficial to me and the council as the new council member from Ward 2.

Here is what I have been doing:

I became a member of the St. Vrain Rotary club, which merged with the Rotary Club of Niwot in 2019. We are thirty individuals who come together to serve the Longmont and Niwot communities. I participate in many service projects every year - too many to list here.

As a Rotarian, I have written grants for and overseen two projects. In 2018, the Indian Peaks Elementary school principal identified their students needed headphones and earbuds. The grant purchased headphones for K- 2 and earbuds for the third through fifth graders. Over three hundred students benefited from this grant.

The second grant project came from an idea the Indian Peaks principal had when Rotary asked what else their students needed. Title 1 school students do not have the opportunity to experience age appropriate bilingual live theater. In 2023, I wrote a grant, to bring the Creede Repertory Young Audience Outreach Tour, YAOT to Longmont for the first time. The grant was supported by both a Rotary District matching grant and private donations along with technical support from the Firehouse Art Center. The bilingual play was performed at each of the K - 8

Title 1 schools and at the Dickens Opera house. More than 1,200 students and over one hundred staff enjoyed the play. The Creede YAOT was a resounding success! Creede YAOT returned in 2024, this time funded by the Firehouse Art Center.

El Comite de Longmont appointed me to serve on their board beginning in 2015 serving as Board Secretary for the last four years. I have served three terms and left the board due to term limits. El Comite is helping to improve the lives of our immigrant and Latino community and build partnerships. Diversity, equity and inclusion is very important to me. This is why I have devoted many years as a member of the El Comite board.

Since 2015, I have been an active member of the Longmont Multicultural Action Committee, LMAC supports the city's efforts to embrace and celebrate our multicultural communities. You may not know I have been serving on this city committee because the city council does not appoint committee members.

I also serve on the Early Childhood Council of Boulder County Advisory Council. Early Childhood Education was an issue I devoted significant time to as a council member. Beginning in 2017, I was selected to be on the Advisory Council. This group is made up of childcare organizations, government, nonprofits and community members along with the Staff of ECCBC. The Advisory council meetings keep me informed and educated around the regulatory, financial and staffing needs of early childhood education service providers. One of our great challenges in Longmont is the lack of affordable, quality childcare from infant care to preschool age children. As the pandemic showed, childcare is not just a family issue it is an economic development issue. I have built deep relationships throughout Boulder County in my work with the Advisory Council. If appointed to Ward 2, I will continue this work and bring information back to the Longmont city council.

In conclusion, you see I have not stopped serving. I have served on a nonprofit board, El Comite and a city board, Longmont Multicultural Action Committee, a policy board, the Early Childhood Council of Boulder County as well as a civic organization, the Rotary Club of Niwot. I feel I am more qualified to serve on the council than when I was first elected in 2007.

I ask for your vote to be appointed to the Ward 2 city council seat.

Thank you for service on the City Council.

Sarah S. Levison

P.S. I forgot to mention I have served as a Boulder County election judge since 2022. It is an honor to help our residents vote in each and every election.

Sarah S. Levison

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Longmont, CO 80501
levison4longmont@yahoo.com
720 352-6089

Career Objective: To be appointed to the City of Longmont, Ward 2 city council seat.

Current civic, nonprofit and board experience:

Civic: Rotary club of Niwot member, Club secretary 2018 - present

Non Profit: El Comite de Longmont, Board member 2015-2024. Board Secretary, 2020 to 2024.

Boards: Longmont Multicultural Action committee 2015 - present
Early Childhood Council of Boulder County, Advisory Council 2018- present.

Immediate past Employment

2022 - 2024 Boulder County, Colorado Election Judge. Trained to serve in various roles for the primary, general and coordinated elections.

2007 - 2015

City of Longmont, Colorado, City Council Member at Large, term limited November 2015

In addition to policy initiatives,

In 2007, Levison saved the city's ice rink from closing. The ice rink is still open and being enjoyed by everyone.

In 2008, Levison started the Open Forum council meeting where residents can dialogue with the council. Open Forum is so popular the council schedules it twice a year.

In 2008, appointed to an ad hoc committee of city council and staff to cut the 2009 budget due to the "The Great Recession" economic crisis.

In 2013, led the council to start the city's first Hackathon. The event led to the creation of the Tinkermill.

In 2013, led the initiative to create the city's first summer meal program supported by a grant from the Federal government.

In Levison's two terms on city Council, she personally found over \$300,00 in grant money from the federal government and other grantors to fund policy initiatives.

Policy initiatives:

2008 Led City Task Force composed of council members, political party representatives and independents that rewrote the 1999 Longmont Fair Campaign Finance Act. City council enacted the new ordinance..

2009 -2011 Initiated council direction to create Longmont's first ever anti-poverty program, RISE – Road to Independence, Security and Empowerment with 5 years of budget funding committed to July 2016. Researched programs nationwide and collaborated with staff in design of the program. Program has been successful with families growing themselves out of poverty.

2012-2013 As a policy committee member, convened Colorado Municipal (CML) League Policy

subcommittee drafting a new policy statement on Education. Statement was adopted by the policy committee and unanimously approved by membership and added to CML official advocacy and policy statement.

2013- 2015 Member of Longmont team chosen as one of six cities nationwide to receive a Technical Assistance grant from National League of Cities (NLC), Youth, Education and Family Institute to develop best practices on Educational Alignment Framework for Young Children. NLC grant is funded by W.K. Kellogg and Annie E. Casey Foundations.

2015 Member of committee that rewrote the policy on Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations for the National League of Cities. The new policy was adopted by the FAIR committee and the membership of the National League of Cities.

Committee appointments

City boards:

Cable Trust Board

Historic Preservation Commission

Multicultural Strategic Plan Committee

Neighborhood Group Leaders Association

Envision Longmont – Comprehensive Plan steering committee

External Boards:

El Comite de Longmont

LiveWell Longmont Steering Committee

Northwest Rail Governmental Committee

Visit Longmont

Statewide Boards:

Colorado Municipal League Executive Board member representing large cities

Colorado Municipal League Policy Committee, City of Longmont representative

National Boards and policy committees:

National League of Cities, Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations, Chairperson 2014 - 2015, Vice Chair 2013-2014.

National League of Cities, Youth, Education and Family Council member

National League of Cities, Women in Municipal Government Board member

Past Board appointments

City of Longmont **Economic Vitality Taskforce member**. Appointed by city council to represent community stakeholders. Taskforce developed recommendations and long term economic development strategies that were adopted by the City Council. (18 months)

City of Longmont Planning and Zoning Commission, Art in Public Places Committee

1st and Main Transit Area redevelopment plan committee

National League of Cities Futures Panel on Democratic Governance

Immediate Past Secretary of Colorado Women in Government board

Civic and non profit boards: 2015 - 2017 Elected to the League of Women Voters Board. Resigned the board to run for City of Longmont Mayor in July of 2017.

Past Employment

Government- 8 years

Deputy Clerk, U.S, District Court – Northern District of California, San Jose and Southern District of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Case management for civil and criminal dockets. Convened juries, issued search warrants. Support to the District Judges and Magistrates, their law clerks and staff.

Clerk, County Office of Civil Courts, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

File and records document management.

Records Clerk – University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Rackham Graduate School.

Records management and advising of graduate students. Verification of coursework to award degrees.

Business – 5 years

Mel Schneider, Attorney At Law and title company, Greenbelt, Maryland

General and real estate law practice. Administrative support for real estate closings. Lead staff member for marketing and business development with real estate offices and agents.

Ann Arbor Board of Realtors, Ann Arbor, Michigan Membership Secretary.

Responsible for membership development classes, weekly newsletter, administrative support for Executive Director.

Assistant Manager, Thornager's Deli and Catering, Flagstaff, Arizona

Managed staff of three in a small restaurant. A portion of the business was corporate and personal catering services.

Past Volunteer experience

Neighborhood co-leader for the Historic Eastside neighborhood of 700 households. Neighborhood is 25% monolingual Hispanic, with incomes that qualify it for federal Community Development Block Grants. Wrote grants for funding from City of Longmont sources, organized community events, represented the neighborhood at city meetings. Team member for Neighborhood Revitalization project grant from city. Wrote grant awarded from city and led project to develop a master plan for the neighborhood park which was adopted by the Longmont City Council. (4 years) The Master Plan led to the update to the park playground with a train theme that was called for in the Plan.

City of Longmont **Economic Vitality Taskforce member**. Appointed by city council to represent community stakeholders. Taskforce developed recommendations and long term economic development strategies that were adopted by the City Council. (18 months)

Junior Great Books leader. Parent leader for elementary school programs. Created the first Spanish speaking student book group for 1st through 3rd grades in the school district. (3 years)

Member, City of Longmont **Museum Advisory Board** – Citizen Board that advises the City Council on the operations and management of the city's museum. Appointed by city council. (18 months)

Director, Summer Art in Collyer Park. Created and directed a free, neighborhood based community art program for families and children sponsored by the Historic Eastside Neighborhood Association. In two years, raised over \$16,000 in cash and in kind funding. Organized volunteers. Developed a program of art workshops taught by local artists – painters, fiber artists, sculptors, musicians, dancers and actors held outdoors in a city park. Workshops were attended by over 600 families in the two summers of the program. (2 years)

Education and Professional Development

Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania Bachelor of Arts degree

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Graduate coursework in Communications – no degree

Prince George Community College, Maryland Real Estate license course – no degree

National League of Cities – Leadership Development program - Silver Level certificate awarded

Colorado Municipal League – Leadership Development program – Certificate awarded

City of Longmont - Training in Appreciative Inquiry method of public engagement and Priority Based Budgeting.

Skills and Areas of Expertise

Policy Analysis and Development

Strategic planning for both government and nonprofit organizations

Budgeting within tight fiscal constraints

Performance measurement principles

Civic engagement including as the Appreciative Inquiry method

Meeting facilitation

Public speaking

Lobbying and Advocacy

Fundraising

Grant Writing experience

Executive hiring and evaluation – council hires and reviews City Manager and City Attorney. During my term on council, the council hired both of the current executives.

Experienced interviewer – council interviewed over 100 residents a year to serve on boards and commissions