

Sustainable Newton Interview Questions for Covington City Council Candidates

0. Please take up to three minutes to introduce yourself and highlight what you would bring to the role of council member.
1. Scientists attribute the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires, floods, heatwaves, major hurricanes, and other extreme weather events to global warming caused by human carbon emissions. To what extent are you personally concerned about current impacts and future risks of Climate Change?
2. What role should city governments play in responding to, mitigating, or avoiding impacts from Climate Change?
3. Sustainable Newton has adopted the [Drawdown Georgia](#) climate action framework for [our efforts](#) here in Newton County. Developed by a team of researchers and scientists from Georgia's major universities, Drawdown Georgia emphasizes 20 carbon reduction solutions across the Electricity, Transportation, Buildings & Materials, Food & Agriculture, and Land Sinks.
 - a. On which of these 20 climate solutions do you believe the City of Covington is best positioned to act?
 - b. What steps would you propose/support to increase the City's effectiveness implementing these solutions.
4. As an electric service provider, Covington operates a utility company. This requires council members to represent both the citizens who elect them and the business interests of that utility company. We'd like to touch on several policy questions to understand how you would balance those interests. These may not be simple questions, but they're real issues you will face if elected. What we're looking for here is not a complete grasp of the technical and financial implications of these policy choices, but rather insights into how you would approach decision-making.
 - a. Climate solutions like rooftop solar, cogeneration, or energy efficiency improvements reduce household and business demand for electricity. Covington relies on electricity revenue to fund other city services. Can our city balance those interests to achieve meaningful carbon reduction? If so, how?

- b. The Covington City Council recently voted to purchase up to 15 MW of solar-generated electricity from the Municipal Electric Association of Georgia (MEAG). Should the city take additional steps to purchase and/or generate more power from renewable sources?
 - c. Georgia is a Top-10 state for utility-scale solar, but we lag other southern states in roof-top solar adoption. Industry experts blame state and local policies. Which of the following policy changes would you support?
 - i. Standby Capacity Fee – a flat monthly charge customers with distributed generation capabilities (solar, wind, etc.) pay each month, on top of the rate paid for electricity used. Covington reduced the fee in 2019, but Oxford eliminated theirs entirely for residential customers. Would you support eliminating this fee also?
 - ii. Net Metering – like most utilities in Georgia, Covington pays customers less for excess solar energy fed back into the power grid than the rate customers pay the city for electricity used. Customers buy at retail rates (~12 cents/kWh) but can only sell back at the wholesale rate (~3 cents/kWh). In 2019, Georgia Power began a pilot program called Net Metering, where the buy/sell rate is the same. Should Covington explore implementing this for solar customers?
 - iii. Time of Use Rate Plan – Georgia Power and some EMCs incent customers to shift power consumption to night and weekend hours to reduce daytime peak demand. Such rate plans are beneficial for solar customers (who generate their own electricity during the day) and electric vehicle owners (who usually charge vehicles at night). Would you encourage the City's Electric Department to consider this approach to make solar and EV adoption more financially beneficial?
5. Covington recently implemented a no-fee electric vehicle charging station for the public at the Welcome Center. The city plans to install additional charging stations and has budgeted to convert three city vehicles to EV in

the FY2022 budget. Do you agree with these efforts? What additional steps would you propose/support to electrify the city's fleet and encourage public EV adoption?

6. Last Question: We describe a Sustainable Newton as "a world where people and planet are as important as profit -- and where future generations matter." What is your vision of a sustainable Covington?