

LAKE COUNTRY NOW

Candidates for Oconomowoc mayor share views on growing inflation, infrastructure and public safety

**Alex Groth**

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With election day fast approaching, incumbent Robert Magnus will soon face challenger Ald. Lou Kowieski on the decision for who will become Oconomowoc's next mayor.

Magnus, first elected in 2020, is hoping for re-election April 5 against Kowieski, who has been an Oconomowoc alderman for the past five years and is running for mayor this time around.

Both candidates said they are focused on tackling issues that are important for residents, including inflation, development and public safety.

The candidates were given a short questionnaire to give residents information on how they would approach the role. Answers were limited to 100 words; some answers were edited for length.

For information on how to vote in this election and to see other candidates on the April 5 ballot, visit myvote.wi.gov/en-us.

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Why are you running for mayor?

Lou Kowieski: I decided to run for mayor because I believe our community deserves transparent accountable government from the top down and a mayor with a vision that places Oconomowoc as a regional destination that is family friendly, event driven and community focused.

Robert Magnus: I am running for re-election with the hope of implementing even more positive changes over the next two years. Overall, the city and residents are doing well; we are safe, businesses are thriving, and economic growth is on a good trajectory. We have several community and business development initiatives in progress, and I remain committed to ensuring that we maintain momentum and see that they are completed on time and held to the highest standard. Oconomowoc has a unique charm, and I want to continue to make it the best it can. Smart decisions now will have an impact on generations to come.

What are residents telling you are the most important issues, and how would you address them?

Kowieski: The things I hear the most deal with public safety, growth and infrastructure. Western Lakes Fire District provides incredible service and needs to address the gap between volunteer/paid-on-call personnel and part-time/full-time.

We are the premier place to live, work and play in Southeastern Wisconsin. I would look to strengthen community partnerships, focusing on Phase 2 of the Olympia development and ask our council to look at the housing mix in our comprehensive plan.

For infrastructure, I would focus on the agreements and structure for the Oconomowoc Parkway, complete the Lake Bluff Road connection, and continue to support DPW and utilities.

Magnus: Residents share concerns regarding the challenging labor market and inflation. We are working to control costs and attract talented workers at all staffing levels. We have identified funding needs due to increased costs for public safety. Oconomowoc is in the Top 100 safest cities in the country, thanks to the OPD and WLFD. Our support must continue. Another critical issue is the tunnel. A portion of the Lake Country Trail at Highway 67 and Oconomowoc Parkway has been a significant concern. We recently received federal funding to open the tunnel. I am committed to seeing this project to completion and am thankful for all involved.

What is your position on development within the city?

Kowieski: We have positioned well over the past 10 years, and I am proud of my contributions over the past five as an alderman and city advocate. The largest development opportunity in front of the city is Olympia/Phase 2. The vision of this area as a regional destination with the reactivation of the hill and sports complexes to the south will enhance

our regional draw and family-friendly, safe position in the market. This development has many opportunities and challenges and will require a mayor, council and staff willing to work with surrounding communities, county and state the private market to fully realize its potential and benefits.

Magnus: Smart growth must be balanced with small-town charm. With strong fiscal responsibility and stewardship, we will continue to see positive economic development and an increase in services to meet resident needs. We don't spend money we don't have. Instead, we investigate creative options and partnerships that benefit everyone and control our costs. Thoughtful development will build our tax base but must be balanced with the wishes of the current residents. The beauty of our lakes should be accessible for all. With strong leadership and strategic initiatives, we will continue our journey as a vibrant, strong and sustainable city for years to come.

Lou Kowieski

Address: 131 N. Locust St.

Age: 50

Occupation: Owner, OconPromo & Oconomowoc Tours and Events

Past political experience: Alderman, District 2

Contact info: 414-875-7625

Robert Magnus

Address: 1025 N. Morgan Road

Age: 59

Occupation: Veterinarian and business consultant

Past political experience: Mayor

Contact info: 262-424-7625

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