

District 13 Interim Alder Application

Tag Evers

2329 Keyes Avenue (since 2006)

C: 608.219.9676

W: 608.284.5471

tagevers@gmail.com

Biographical Sketch:

I moved to Madison thirty years ago this summer with the intent of getting a doctorate in Agricultural & Applied Economics from UW-Madison. I wanted to work on global environmental problems, particularly those involving power differentials between indigenous groups and European colonizers. Before long I was going up north to places like Butternut Lake, as the treaty-rights dispute was heating up.

Ph.D-level economics turned out to be a bad fit. The program was steeped in theoretical math, not my strong suit. So I stopped with a Master's and switched over to promoting concerts. I started Tag Team Productions in 1992, which eventually became True Endeavors. In the years since, I've had the privilege of organizing over 2500 events in clubs and theaters in Madison. Most of the time, my shows are about blowing off steam, but I realized from the beginning that it's about more than the jams, it's about the [community that gets created in the process](#). Along the way, I've helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for various non-profits, including [The Progressive](#), [Center for Media & Democracy](#), Rape Crisis Center, Goodman Center, WORT, Working Families of Wisconsin, Planned Parenthood, and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, among others. I was also able to use my skills as an event organizer during the 2011 Uprising, bringing national touring musicians to Madison for the protests at the Capitol.

I took a break from promoting in 1997 and did a great deal of freelance writing, mostly for Isthmus, but also for The Progressive and Yes Magazine. I wrote on many topics, but my primary emphasis was on mass incarceration and restorative justice.

1997 was also the year that I got involved with Haiti. I traveled there that spring and began volunteering with [Haiti Allies](#), a Madison-based non-profit. I remain involved to this day, organizing two benefit concerts every summer at Art in the Barn in Fitchburg. Haiti Allies supports a school and feeding program in Cite Soleil, a desperately poor shantytown outside of Port-au-Prince. Furthermore, we recently built a factory adjacent to our school to upcycle discarded rice and flour bags, converting them into yoga mat bags, which we're marketing to yoga practitioners here in the US. The goal of [Karma Yoga Bags](#) is to move from charity to sustainable development, providing meaningful work and standing shoulder to shoulder with our friends and allies in Haiti.

Poverty and oppression are not just miles away in a foreign country, that's obvious. I began to open my eyes to its prevalence in Madison. I got involved with the

Study Circles on Race initiative under Mayor Sue Bauman. A lot of talk, but not much happened. In 2013, the Race To Equity report documented our dramatic failure as a community to address racial inequality. To wit, Wisconsin has the nation's worst rate of mass incarceration of young African American males, and Dane County is worse than the state average. Wisconsin is among the states with the widest academic achievement gap, and Dane County is worse than the state average. Pastor Alex Gee's Justified Anger project also came out in 2013, further underscoring the profound and troubling disconnect between Madison's image of itself as a progressive and hip place to live and the often dismal reality for people of color.

Fast forward five years. Here we are, in 2018, Trump is president, and like many of us, I'm very worried about the future of our country. The question arises, what can I do now to make a difference?

Why I Wish to Serve and What I Hope to Accomplish

I sold my company to Frank Productions in 2012. I'm at a place in my career where I no longer have to work 60-70 hours a week. I'm currently employed as the Senior Talent Buyer at FPC Live, the company formed by the recent merger of Majestic Live and Frank Productions. I've been tasked with re-branding the Orpheum as a seated venue, and continuing to serve the programming needs of the Barrymore Theatre, Capitol Theater, Memorial Union's Shannon Hall, and Overture Hall. My schedule is flexible, and my days are rarely hectic.

I reached out to Alder Eskrich when I read she was stepping down, and have also spoken to current and former alders to get their perspective. I met with members of the five neighborhood associations in the district, including three association presidents. In so doing I discovered there is a multiplicity of concerns, particularly with respect to development along the South Park corridor. I deeply appreciate the efforts to make these concerns heard on the part of volunteers and local citizens. It's my view that projects work best with input from the ground up, resulting in more buy-in and better outcomes. Personally, I would greatly enjoy working with the neighborhoods to ensure their voices are heard in the planning process.

I don't believe that voice means veto, and I have little patience for NIMBYism. I've lived in Madison a long time, and I know how a vocal minority can put a stop to what on the balance seems like an overall plus for our city. I need only recall what happened to the Madison Blues Festival held at Olin Park in the early 2000s. Despite concert appearances by Ray Charles, Al Green, B.B. King, Little Richard, and Mavis Staples, the festival ceased after five years as the costs of dealing with neighborhood opposition made it impossible to continue.

The residents along the S. Park corridor are aware that greater density is inevitable. They welcome affordable housing and strongly desire access to affordable and healthy fresh food. Residents in Bay Creek and Monona Bay have heard the daunting prediction that our city's population is set to increase by 70,000 in the next 20 plus years, requiring 40,000 more places to live in a city already stressed

by recent growth. But it is these residents who will likely bear a disproportionate share of the burden incurred by these projects, i.e., spillover effects and negative externalities such as congestion, noise, and potential changes to property values. It's imperative their voices be heard. Development will happen along S. Park; there's no stopping that. But it's absolutely necessary that residents have their voices heard from the outset if we're going to have the type of buy-in that leads to residents feeling embraced, not pushed aside, as our city grows.

While development projects along the S. Park corridor are among the top issues facing the next District 13 alder, like many Madison residents I've been concerned about police shootings. I've done a cursory read of the OIR report and MPD's response. We are making progress, but we have a very long way to go. Systemic and institutional racism has not melted away. The problems are complex. Too many guns are on the street. Too many young people carrying trauma and living lives bereft of hope. We simply cannot arrest our way out these problems. The various centers of power in our city -- the faith community, the private sector, non-profits, city staff, MPD, MMSD and concerned citizens -- we must keep pressing on if the issues raised five years ago by the Race To Equity report and Alex Gee's missive are to be meaningfully addressed.

I view the OIR report as a positive example of how council responded to neighborhood concerns and took measures to effect changes in MPD policy and practice. This is a template for the kind of collaborative work that I'd be honored to participate in should I be appointed -- Listening to each other, building consensus, negotiating with each other when we disagree, and working with city staff and our neighborhoods for positive outcomes.

This collaborative approach will be necessary as council and planning deal with the Triangle redevelopment. The four hundred plus units are homes to a high percentage of immigrants, refugees, and persons with disabilities. At this time in our nation's history, we have to get this right. Our best Madison values must inform our efforts, and all sectors of our city must be committed to ensuring affordable housing and attendant support services for the vulnerable populations in the Triangle.

A similar collaborative approach must be taken with respect to transportation. As I've noted, I've lived in Madison for thirty years. I've witnessed many changes, but among the most severe is traffic congestion. Taking on seventy thousand new residents cannot mean seventy thousand more cars. Rapid transit must be a county-wide priority with council playing a vital role.

Collaboration does not mean we will all agree. In my years in business, I have frequently worked with individuals across a broad range of backgrounds. I've sought to program events that appeal to diverse audiences, to be inclusive in terms of who gets on stage and who has voice. I've helped resolve conflicts and learned from perspectives different from my own. I am not a purist. I firmly believe the perfect must never be the enemy of the good. If appointed to the interim D13 seat, I would work diligently to serve inclusively, effectively and collegially.

Spring 2019 Election

I have not decided whether I would run in the spring. My decision would be contingent on whether I was a good fit. I'd be looking for feedback as to how effectively I represent neighborhood concerns to city staff, and how well I network with fellow council members to achieve positive results. There is much at stake in our city over the next nine months, and my goal would be to embody a dynamic and effective presence on council. If I find myself contemplating a run, and a candidate were to step up who I felt would be more qualified, particularly if that individual were better positioned to give voice to neighborhood concerns among those living along S. Park and in the Triangle, I would strongly consider stepping aside and endorsing that candidate.