

2021 Mayoral Candidate Survey



1. One in five Pittsburghers are living with food insecurity.

Inspired by our previous successful city partnerships, such as our Lean & Green Lunch and Learn series and Heart of a Hero (which received national recognition in an American College of Lifestyle Medicine documentary), HAP has created the Ethical Eating Collective, which is working to bring healthy and affordable plant-based nutrition to residents who need it the most.

Will you commit to sitting down with HAP to discuss ways your office can support our campaign to ensure food justice to all Pittsburgh communities?

Absolutely. Building a sustainable city means building an equitable food system. There are many pieces to the puzzle. One piece is making sure that children and families do not go hungry. I launched a food truck that delivers meals to children when school is out. During the pandemic, I've partnered with 412 Food Rescue to connect struggling restaurants with hungry families in the city. To date, we've served 500,000+ meals to these families. Another part of this is making sure that people have access to healthy food. Urban farms are a key piece to this puzzle. They are an easy way to provide fresh vegetables to families. As Mayor, I wrote and distributed urban agriculture guidelines to make it easy for residents to use vacant lots for these purposes. I'm currently working with groups on the Hilltop to help support the Hilltop Farm, which will be the largest urban farm in the US.

2. Pittsburgh's previous Climate Action Plan (CAP) included the goal of reducing meat consumption by 50% by 2030. In the most recent plan, this goal was removed and replaced with a lesser goal. (Humane Action Pittsburgh can provide qualified experts to assist the city with measurement.)

Considering the United Nations #1 recommendation to combat climate change is to reduce or eliminate meat consumption, will you ensure meat reduction is prioritized in the CAP 4.0?

Even though the City has limited tools to manage meat consumption, we have made great strides in reducing meat consumption and food waste where possible in city procurement; as well as supporting the City's farmer's market program and advances to urban agriculture and farming.

3. Separating bonded elephant pairs, fighting progressive and humane Pittsburgh ordinances, and having a veterinarian refer to the Zoo as a “third world jail for elephants” have earned the Pittsburgh Zoo the title of In Defense of Animal’s “2019 Worst Zoo in North America for Elephants.”

In 2015, the Pittsburgh Zoo forfeited their AZA accreditation over their elephant handling policy, which constitutes a material breach of their lease with the City of Pittsburgh. Even with several extensions and letters from the mayor demanding restoration, the Zoo has not come into compliance.

They are now accredited by the much lower ZAA (the letters deceptively resemble the AZA), a trade organization promoting the right for private citizens and exhibitors to own exotic animals.

If the City of Pittsburgh continues to be ignored by the Zoo, or worse yet, drops the AZA requirement from the terms of the new lease, essential animal protections like routine veterinary care requirements could be replaced with the ZAA’s substandard policies. Considering the Zoo has received numerous USDA violations, there’s even more reason for AZA standards to be restored.

The ZAA caters to roadside zoos (think the Netflix series “ Tiger King”) and its standards do not meaningfully protect animal welfare or public safety. The ZAA has actually lobbied against animal protection legislation and continue to push to exempt their members from animal protection laws.

Barbara Baker, President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Zoo, is also the Board Chair of the ZAA. This means Dr. Baker is in charge of accrediting her own organization, a clear conflict of interest.

The Zoo’s current lease expires on December 31, 2022.

As leader of the city and Board member of the Pittsburgh Zoo, will you demand restoration of AZA accreditation and ensure that the new lease has definitive and actionable damages for noncompliance?

Mission accomplished. I worked with the Pittsburgh Zoo’s leadership, and they are now restarting the process to renew their AZA accreditation. Being Mayor means being able to work with partners to get things done.

4. For a city of our size, Pittsburgh has one of the cruelest and most archaic wildlife trapping programs in the country. Citizens have become accustomed to calling Animal Care and Control for a taxpayer-subsidized trap that results in euthanasia of hundreds of animals every year. Not only is trapping ineffective and inhumane, but it requires Pittsburghers to pay tens of thousands of dollars every year for a program that even Animal Care and Control admits doesn't solve the problem. The good news is, easy and humane solutions exist!

HAP has hired an advertising agency and made a sizable investment to educate Pittsburghers on humane solutions that actually work – and would mitigate the city's litter problem. If successful, not only will the lives of these innocent animals be saved, but so will tens of thousands of tax dollars.

What will you do as mayor to support HAP's wildlife educational campaign?

As Mayor, I have enjoyed a strong partnership with Humane Action to tackle issues ranging from the zoo and education, to employee wellness and animal care and control. This includes my own, personal, participation in meatless Monday, as well as opportunities to speak to City employees through our Human Resources Department.

We have also been working to expand training in the Bureau of Police to ensure every zone has a well qualified officer working in the humane treatment of animals, and I plan to continue to work with Humane Action to become a model in the United States.

The root cause of most wildlife/resident conflicts is improperly stored trash. How will you enforce existing city code related to trash storage?

There are three parts to how we want to deal with improperly stored trash. First, we have hired more inspectors for the Department of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections and provided them with tools to allow them to better do their jobs, such as emails, tablets, and GPS devices. Secondly, we've updated the 311 system by hiring more employees and upgrading technology to make them better able to handle reports from residents. Lastly, however, we have to work on the amount of waste we – as a city –

produce. I want to work on building Zero Waste infrastructure in the City in my next term.