

Steve Qunell

Steve Qunell says his involvement with city government here provides him with the background to serve on City Council.

“We need experience on the Council,” he said. “The city has lost touch with its working class roots. When I first got here I could buy a house and now I wouldn’t even be able to afford a house.”

Qunell since 2000 has lived on and off in Whitefish, but most recently moved back in 2015. He has served on the city’s Lakeshore Protection Committee, the Board of Adjustments and the Planning Board.

Qunell earned a bachelor’s in history from the University of South Carolina, his teaching certification from California State University, Chico and a master’s from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He has been an educator for 20 years and is currently a teacher at Linderman Education Center in Kalispell.

Qunell says he has provided a middle-of-the-road perspective while serving on Planing Board and he would continue to do that on Council.

He says growth in the city has provided many of the amenities that folks today enjoy and he’d like to continue to guide growth in a way that make sense for the city. He would like to focus on making sure the city’s growth policy is reviewed.

“My perspective from serving on the Planning Board 10 years ago and today is that it needed review then and it needs it now as we’re going to keep growing,” he said.

Affordable housing

Qunell said after years of getting only a handful of deed-restricted affordable housing units from the voluntary process through planned unit development projects, Whitefish needed to change the way it was handling affordable housing. He says the city’s inclusionary

zoning program may need amendments in the future if it doesn’t bring about housing. “The alternative was to do nothing,” he said. “We will have to wait and see what happens. We need to build houses that working-class people can afford.” The key for the program will be to allow developers to be creative in developing housing, he notes. “If they want to build in some place where affordable housing doesn’t make sense, they need to show us that they care about our affordable housing crisis and build elsewhere,” he said. “We need to continue to have flexibility.”

Qunell says managing growth means reviewing the city’s growth policy and making sure that the corridor plan being worked on for Highway 93 South is completed.

“I want to ask the community where they think we’re at and what they would like to see next,” he said. “Parking and traffic are the next big picture item we need to work on. We also need to look at the architectural standards because we seem to be getting a lot of single-pitched roofs.”

Planning regarding transportation is important, he says, creating frontage and feeder roads to help with traffic, along with creating more roads to access the north part of Whitefish over the viaduct as growth occurs there are important. Qunell says he would like to see the city and state work together to address traffic issues in Whitefish, while noting that increasing visitation in Glacier National Park means it should be no surprise that Whitefish faces traffic and parking



Growth