



Meet your local candidates for Mayor and City Council positions

Fall 2026

ELECTION DAY IS NOV. 3,
2026

MEET YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026 – make your voice heard and exercise your right to vote. Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Visit the Carver County Elections website at

www.carvercountymn.gov/elections to check your voter registration, find your polling place, view a sample ballot, and explore absentee and early voting options.

The candidates for the City of Cologne Mayor (one 2-year term,) and City Council positions (two four-year terms) were each asked to provide a brief introductory bio and answer the same questions. The full unedited responses of the candidates who replied are included in this document.

Candidates' unedited responses and "about me" bios are listed by Mayor role first, in alphabetical order, followed by Council candidates second, in alphabetical order.



In September, the League of Women Voters of Eastern Carver County hosted a Candidate Forum in Cologne. Pictured, from left to right, are the City of Cologne candidates who participated in the forum: Mayoral candidates Lona Hendricks and Matt Lein; and City Council candidates Cassie Broll, Jayson Read, Matthew "Wally" Waldack and Scott Williams. Not pictured are Council candidates Jon Howard and Sean Ulvila.

*To view the recording of the forum, please visit
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDPm8NE4oRc>*

Candidates for Mayor: Lona Hendricks, Matt Lein

Lona Hendricks

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three strategic priorities for the City of Cologne over the next four years, and why?

A: My first priority is to create a vision for our community so when our wastewater treatment plant is replaced (second priority) we can align our decisions with the direction we are going. In the meantime, we can work on my third priority which is revitalizing our downtown. To accomplish this, we need to create an environment where resident feedback is welcome and each resident's voice weighs the same as their neighbor's. We need to encourage civic engagement by creating commissions and working collaboratively with our town's businesses, non-profits, and community initiatives.

Q: How would you balance responsible growth, infrastructure needs, and preservation of Cologne's character?

A: Cologne's growth is stunted by our wastewater treatment plant's capacity. As replacement plans are finalized, we should use our time to plan for our future. Responsible growth is setting clear distinctions between our "needs" and "wants" before setting priorities. Residents have expressed that they want to preserve our "small town feel," but what does that mean? If we want to stay small then we need to be ok driving a distance to get groceries, attending events, and commuting for work. If we want to avoid franchises then we need to support our small businesses even when it's more expensive.

Q: What specific steps would you take to strengthen Cologne's tax base while keeping the community affordable for residents and businesses?

A: We need to diversify our funding sources so we don't need to depend as heavily on tax from new builds. That involves investing time and resources into grant writing, cost sharing with neighboring cities, and building a community foundation to fund projects. We can also stretch our city's budget further by staying within our city's current footprint. That means optimizing and revitalizing our downtown instead of spending money to build new roads and water lines for sprawling growth.

Q: How would you promote transparency, fiscal accountability, and resident engagement in city decision-making?

A: To create accountability, we need clear, consistent communication directly from our city government through email alerts, monthly newsletters, and an updated website. I would embrace feedback from community conversations by facilitating townhall meetings. I would create additional ways for residents to be directly involved by creating new commissions to focus on green spaces, aging, economic development, public safety, etc. This ensures that a variety of resident voices are represented in city decision making. When residents feel involved in the process and know the "why" behind decisions, they feel a sense of shared ownership in the community.

Q: How long have you lived in Cologne and/or Carver County?

A: I have lived in Cologne for seven years.

Q: Have you previously served in a city leadership or committee role? If yes, please describe the role and length of service.

A: I have not

Lona Hendricks 'About Me':

My family and I moved to Cologne seven years ago from the Twin Cities. My husband and I both grew up in small rural Minnesota towns, met in college, and later moved to the Twin Cities to start our careers. My work experience is in the social work field securing housing for homeless refugees and asylees, and supporting families living in low-income housing in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Bloomington, and Northfield. My husband and I decided to move back to a rural area because we craved a quieter lifestyle. We chose Cologne because we saw signs of growth not guaranteed in small rural towns: a new school and community center, thoughtfully designed neighborhoods with bike paths, and a splash pad.

Since moving here, both of my kids have started school and I have shifted my time to volunteering in our community. I joined Cologne Community of Belonging and now lead our chapter of this Carver County Public Health initiative. I helped establish and continue to coordinate the Louis Street Gardens, Cologne Art Council, and our new history group. Through this work I have seen how our city council, businesses, non-profits, and other initiatives work together and I feel like improvements can be made. I want to create a comfortable environment for residents to share ideas knowing that they will be met with curiosity and an open-mind. Although change is inevitable as our city grows, I want our city to approach the future with intentionality by collectively designing our community to reflect our values, protect our traditions, and meet our needs. Having lived and worked in various sized towns throughout the state, I will bring fresh eyes and a unique perspective when it comes to building and maintaining our city's vitality.

Matt Lein

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three strategic priorities for the City of Cologne over the next four years, and why?

A: Build a new wastewater treatment plant. Cologne is nearing the end of its capacity and will not grow any further without this in place.

B: Plan for housing growth. With the commute into the bigger cities becoming easier and faster, Cologne could have a big demand for new housing. Keeping the small town feel with responsible growth will be the key to success.

C: Plan for bringing in new businesses. This starts with supporting the businesses we already have, since they're our best ambassadors. I'll also focus on the types of businesses that fit our community and strengthen our main street and quality of life, because that's what makes people want to locate here.

Q: How would you balance responsible growth, infrastructure needs, and preservation of Cologne's character?

A: I see responsible growth, infrastructure, and Cologne's character as one decision, not three. Growth should happen at a pace our water, sewer, and roads can actually support, so we plan infrastructure ahead of development and make sure new projects pay their fair share instead of passing costs to current residents. At the same time, we guide where and how we grow through our comprehensive plan and zoning, keeping the small-town feel residents value: a walkable downtown, nearby neighbors, and the surrounding open space. Growth that fits Cologne is welcome. Growth that strains our budget or changes who we are needs a closer look.

Q: What specific steps would you take to strengthen Cologne's tax base while keeping the community affordable for residents and businesses?

A: For Cologne, the order matters. I've focused on the basics first: we've kept up with our roads, and our fresh water supply is in good shape. The next step is a new wastewater treatment plant, because it's what makes any responsible growth possible. Until we have that capacity, we can't take on significant new development without putting costs or risks on current residents. So my approach is infrastructure first, then growth. Once the plant is in place, we can welcome new homes and businesses at a pace we can support, with new development paying its fair share, and with zoning and planning that protect the small-town feel that makes Cologne a great place to live.

Q: How would you promote transparency, fiscal accountability, and resident engagement in city decision-making?

A: I believe residents have a right to see how decisions are made. That's why we post full meeting agendas and information packets on the city website, so people can see what we're deciding and read the details before the meeting, not after. Just as important, I talk with residents regularly and keep my door open, because the best input often comes from conversations, not just formal meetings. On fiscal accountability, I want every major decision, especially the wastewater treatment plant, to come with clear costs, options, and a plan for how we'll pay for it. And as a small city, we can keep improving step by step, with practical, low-cost ways to make information easier to find and easier to understand.

Q: How long have you lived in Cologne and/or Carver County?

A: 25 years

Q: Have you previously served in a city leadership or committee role? If yes, please describe the role and length of service.

A: Cologne Academy School Board, Cologne Planning Commission, Cologne City Council, Cologne Mayor

Matt Lein 'About Me':

I'm Matt Lein, mayor of Cologne, Minnesota, and I'm running for re-election.

My wife and I moved to Cologne in 2002 and raised our two children here. I got involved in city government in 2006, serving on the Planning Commission and then the City Council. I served as mayor in 2013 and 2014, then lost the next election by just six votes. Having lost by that margin, I know every vote counts. I returned to the office in 2017 and have served ever since. From 2008 to 2014, I also served on the board of Cologne Academy, our local charter school.

I work full time driving a roll off truck for a local landscape company. My wife and I also run a small side business engraving monuments and foot markers at cemeteries, which keeps us busy through the summer. In the winter, we enjoy traveling.

As mayor, I've focused on getting the basics right: improving our roads, securing our fresh water, and now planning the new wastewater treatment plant that responsible growth depends on. I post full meeting agendas and information packets online and talk with residents regularly, because people should know how their city makes decisions.

I'm running again to see these projects through, build the foundation first, and keep Cologne a good place to raise a family.

Candidates for City Council: Cassie Broll, Jon Howard, Jayson Read, Sean Ulvila, Matthew “Wally” Waldack, Scott Williams

Cassie Broll

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three strategic priorities for the City of Cologne over the next four years, and why?

A: My top three priorities are community engagement, developing the Cologne 2050 Plan, and addressing our wastewater treatment plant. While the treatment plant limits our ability to grow, it also provides an opportunity to thoughtfully plan and invest in the Cologne we want. With resident input, we can identify priorities, plan for infrastructure, and begin cultivating relationships with businesses that complement our community. We also need stronger communication between city government and residents. Residents cannot provide meaningful input on issues they don't know are being considered. Making information accessible and creating clear opportunities for feedback is essential to Cologne's future.

Q: How would you balance responsible growth, infrastructure needs, and preservation of Cologne's character?

A: Growth should be intentional, not simply pursued for the sake of getting bigger. We need to thoughtfully plan for infrastructure and ensure we understand the long-term costs and benefits before making development decisions. The Cologne 2050 Community Plan will be an opportunity to engage residents and existing businesses in shaping our future. By prioritizing development that supports our community, investing in Main Street and shared spaces, and preserving our open spaces and small-town character, we can welcome thoughtful growth while protecting what makes Cologne special. My goal is to help build a community we'll be proud of in 50 years.

Q: What specific steps would you take to strengthen Cologne's tax base while keeping the community affordable for residents and businesses?

A: I want to focus on intentional commercial and industrial growth that strengthens our tax base without placing additional pressure on residents. I'd work with property owners to identify and fill vacant downtown spaces, making it easier for new, community-minded businesses to establish themselves. I'd also support existing businesses by increasing awareness of what they offer and creating opportunities for residents to shop locally. Thoughtful growth, along with pursuing grants and other outside funding, can help expand our tax base while maintaining Cologne's affordability and small-town character.

Q: How would you promote transparency, fiscal accountability, and resident engagement in city decision-making?

A: I believe these begin with strong communication. I would create multiple ways for residents to stay informed, including streaming and recording council meetings, sharing decisions and important discussions through newsletters and social media, and offering paper communication when preferred. I would also improve the city website so information is easier to find and provide a clear way for residents to contact the council with questions or concerns outside of usual meeting times. Financial decisions

should be presented in a clear, accessible way, including explaining the reasoning behind major expenditures, so residents can understand how their tax dollars are being *spent*.

Q: How long have you lived in Cologne and/or Carver County?

A: I have a longstanding connection to Cologne, though I didn't officially become a resident until 2019. I grew up in Waconia and began spending time in Cologne in high school, when I started dating my now-husband, who grew up here on his family's farm. After college, we moved around the country for school and work. We lived in Nashville, Tennessee, and Seattle, Washington, before returning to Cologne in 2019 to raise our family near loved ones. Having spent much of my life in Carver County, Cologne has been part of my story for many years, even before it became home.

Q: Have you previously served in a city leadership or committee role? If yes, please describe the role and length of service.

A: This would be my first city leadership role. I currently serve on the Carver County Mental Health Local Advisory Council and have been involved with Cologne Communities of Belonging since 2023.

Cassie Broll 'About Me'

I grew up in Waconia and spent a lot of time in Cologne. After college, I married my high school sweetheart and we spent several years living around the country for school and work before returning to his hometown of Cologne in 2019 to raise our two children near family. I hold a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and worked as a psychotherapist specializing in couples and trauma therapy before taking time away from my career to raise our kids. I loved this work, which taught me to listen deeply, understand different perspectives, and look beyond the surface of a problem to understand what lies beneath it. Most importantly, it taught me the value of truly seeing people. Through my work with clients, I came to appreciate how deeply our environments shape us, how much we need connection and a sense of belonging, and how profoundly loneliness can affect us. I began to deeply appreciate the impact of a hometown and its community. That belief led me to Cologne Communities of Belonging, where I have been grateful to work alongside people who care deeply about our community. I also serve on the Carver County Mental Health Local Advisory Council, advocating for greater access to mental health resources. I decided to run for City Council because I love Cologne. It's where we're raising our family and where our loved ones live. I want to help build a community where people of all ages and backgrounds feel they belong, feel empowered to contribute, and know their voices matter in shaping our town's future. I hope to bring people together to thoughtfully build a community we can all be proud of, whether through a favorite park, a walking path, a familiar face, or a family tradition that brings people together.

Jon Howard

No response submitted.

Jayson Read

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three strategic priorities for the City of Cologne over the next four years, and why?

A: Planning is crucial to keeping growth in line with our small town values. We must set a plan for how we'll grow, what we'll avoid, and what defines our town and residents, and keep revisiting it as constraints and lifestyle change.

Community engagement brings residents' voices into the council chambers and keeps the council accountable to their wants and needs.

Fiscal responsibility and careful spending are critical while we wait on the needed Waste Water Treatment Facility upgrades to expand. Costs to run the city continue to rise, and we're nearing the point of maxing out our ability to add more rooftops.

Q: How would you balance responsible growth, infrastructure needs, and preservation of Cologne's character?

A: Most Cologne residents love our small town feel, and I want it to remain a core value. As we begin the Met Council's 2050 regional planning, we must consider what Cologne will look like over the next 20+ years. A key question is what housing we'll need to support growth without sacrificing our values. Being strategic about housing types, and the infrastructure beneath them, will clarify our future costs to build and maintain as we grow. We need to look beyond "more rooftops" and ask "what KIND of rooftops" will shape Cologne for years to come.

Q: What specific steps would you take to strengthen Cologne's tax base while keeping the community affordable for residents and businesses?

A: Like any family facing financial demands with limited funds, we need to budget carefully. Until we expand our Waste Water facility, we're nearly locked in on the number of homes we can build and support. Many residents face the same economic pressures, so putting more onto them isn't the right answer. We should be intentional about where we spend, ensure value from those expenditures, and if we didn't budget for it, we shouldn't spend it. I also believe a deeper dive into regular spending could find areas to trim without losing the exceptional service our city crew provides.

Q: How would you promote transparency, fiscal accountability, and resident engagement in city decision-making?

A: I don't see any transparency issues with the City Council right now, but we can be more intentional. I'd like to promote agenda topics and public hearings on our Facebook page for broader reach to our residents. I'd also like a quarterly report on how we're tracking against our budget categories, giving visibility to potential shortfalls and surpluses. Engagement is critical, so I plan to hold regular office hours to hear residents' thoughts and feedback, bring those voices to the council, and encourage more residents to attend council meetings.

Q: How long have you lived in Cologne and/or Carver County?

A: Nineteen years at the end of November

Q: Have you previously served in a city leadership or committee role? If yes, please describe the role and length of service.

A: I've been a member of the Planning Commission since January 2025. During that time, we've

addressed the new expansion on Village Parkway and have made significant headway in reviewing and revising our current city ordinances to align them to today's version of Cologne.

Jayson Read 'About Me'

My name is Jayson Read, and I've lived in Cologne since 2007, when my wife, Katie, and I moved here with our oldest daughter, Maddy. Since then, we've added three more daughters: Tenley, who is a senior at Central, and twins Maisey and Hathaway, who are in fourth grade there. Over the years, Katie and I have found not just a house but a home in Cologne. Having grown up in a small town in western Minnesota, I love the charm of a small, connected community, like most of you, and I want to ensure we maintain it. I work in the software space as a Director of Project Management and Software Delivery at a startup. The last 15+ years of my career have centered on strategic leadership at both the project and organizational levels, with a main emphasis on setting clear goals and breaking down the path to get there with incremental tasks and milestones to achieve the larger outcome. My community involvement has grown over the last couple of years as my children have gotten older and my time has freed up, which has allowed me the opportunity to join the Cologne Community of Belonging and serve on the Cologne Planning Commission. I enjoy watching baseball, both on TV and in person. I've been to 20 different Major League ballparks and will wax poetic about the purity of the sport if given the opportunity. In addition to baseball, I follow football, soccer, and college basketball. On weekends, I usually try to find a reason to smoke some kind of meat and continue to pursue the elusive goal of "the perfect brisket."

Matthew "Wally" Waldack

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three strategic priorities for the City of Cologne over the next four years, and why?

A: I believe controlled growth, budget stability and infrastructure maintenance are the three largest priorities and struggles for our city in the next four years and beyond. Growth is fickle, we want to grow however our current opportunities are limited by the lack of available properties. Responsible budgeting means keeping taxes predictable, the unpleasant reality is taxes are probably not coming down. Therefore making sure every single dollar spent brings real value to our residents. Some of Cologne's most valuable assets are our roads, water, sewer and city equipment. Proactive maintenance protects the investments we've already paid for and investing in its future while budgeting for improvements ahead of time is critical to keeping harsh tax impacts at bay.

Q: How would you balance responsible growth, infrastructure needs, and preservation of Cologne's character?

A: It comes down to being realistic and cautious with our resources. Right now, our infrastructure demands have us in a bit of a stalemate. Current needs (e.g., waste water treatment plant) are financially hindering our future growth. To break that cycle, we need to move carefully while opening up opportunities for commercial and industrial expansion. Bringing in businesses builds our tax base so existing homeowners aren't carrying the burden alone.

As for Cologne's character, I firmly believe our character isn't just in the buildings, it's in the people who live and work here. If we protect our residents' wallets and grow smartly with light industrial and business/commercial space, we preserve what makes Cologne special while building a solid foundation for the future.

Q: What specific steps would you take to strengthen Cologne's tax base while keeping the community affordable for residents and businesses?

A: Strengthening our tax base starts with fiscal discipline. Our goals will need to be prioritized and adjusted to work within our strict budget. If we spend smart, and work on bringing in the right kind of business and commercial growth, we can keep Cologne affordable for the folks who live here. Bringing in new business and commercial properties is going to be a challenge. New opportunities are limited and many older buildings are not suited for the current needs and building codes. Most will take a large investment up front to take off. I believe working with interested property owners to outline the needs and have a more clear line of communication with building inspectors as to understand the needs of building and renovating.

Q: How would you promote transparency, fiscal accountability, and resident engagement in city decision-making?

A: Real fiscal accountability means showing taxpayers where every dollar goes before it's spent. Neighbors already naturally reach out to me to share their thoughts and concerns, and as a council member, I will always remain accessible and responsive. I want to make city business a two-way street by exploring practical ways to connect, such as the possibilities of live-streamed meetings and clear summaries, or quick notes on utility postcards and emails. Most importantly, whatever communication methods we use must make it easy for residents to ask questions and provide feedback in a way that works best for them, I want every neighbor to have a voice in how their money is spent and be able to show the efforts of our labor and decisions.

Q: How long have you lived in Cologne and/or Carver County?

A: I have lived in Cologne since 2010 and before that I resided in Chaska/Chanhassen since 1986.

Q: Have you previously served in a city leadership or committee role? If yes, please describe the role and length of service.

A: I have not formally been a part of a city led committee or leadership role.

Sean Ulvila

No response submitted.

Scott Williams

No response submitted.