

**Jackson Hole Professional Firefighters  
IAFF Local 5067  
2020 Candidate Questionnaire**

The *Jackson Hole Professional Fire Fighters* represents career firefighters in Teton County and Jackson Wyoming. Our Executive Board will review your responses to these questions. After reviewing your questions you may be asked to meet with or take a call from the Executive Board so we can clarify your answers. Please return this form electronically in order to be considered for endorsement by the *Jackson Hole Professional Fire Fighters* and obtain assistance through Federated Firefighters of WY FIRE PAC.

Candidate Name:

**Len Carlman**

Office Sought:

District (if applicable):

**Teton County Commissioner**

Campaign Committee Name: **Carlman for Commissioner**

Campaign Address: PO Box 1230, Wilson, WY 83014

Campaign Phone Number: 307-733-1191

Campaign Contact Person:

Name

Phone#

E-mail

**Len Carlman**

**307-733-1191**

**len@lencarlman.com**

Address

PO Box 1230, Wilson, WY 83014

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Republican

Other

**I am a Democrat.**

Website Address:

[www.carlmanforcommissioner.com](http://www.carlmanforcommissioner.com)

Do you have a Primary Election opposition? I did. Now I am a candidate in the general election.

General Election Opponent's Name:

There are four candidates in the generalelection; two will win, two will go home. The candidates are: Len Carlman (D), Natalia Macker (D), Melchor Moore (R), and Vickie O'Donoghue (no party)

Have you received any endorsements? Yes, I have. I have not made endorsement-seeking a priority in my campaign – I’ve put much more effort into direct, one-to-one voter contact, but I’m proud to have a few nice endorsements.

If yes, please list your endorsements:

Wyo. State Rep. Liz Storer, Wyoming House District 23

Former Wyo. State Rep. Jim Roscoe, Wyoming House District 22

Former Teton County Commissioner Leslie Petersen

Affordable housing advocacy group ShelterJH

And lots of friends too.

Have you ever held public office?

Yes, but not anything particularly notable.

If Yes, what office and when:

I’ve been a local Democratic Party precinct committee elected official. I don’t remember the years.

I think I had several terms in the past 10 or 15 years.

Why are you running for election?

The Jackson – Teton County Comprehensive Plan asks us to: “Preserve and protect the area’s ecosystem in order to ensure a healthy environment, community and economy for current and future generations.” That is exactly the right vision. It is also a tall order. Making it happen requires leaders with long and deep local and Wyoming experience in conservation and community well-being. With 41 years of community service in Teton County and a lifetime of advocacy for the conservation of our environment, I can help. County government oversees a wide range of services: the list includes and goes beyond planning and zoning, housing and use of SPET monies, roads and pathways, parks and recreation, weed and pest, water and sewer, libraries and fire protection, mental health and indigent care, fairgrounds and fairs, GIS and mapping, building inspection and code enforcement. My 28-year career as a Wyoming lawyer, all of it spent in Teton County, gives me a valuable toolkit for understanding and guiding local government. It would be easy for a county commissioner to get too caught up in the administration of services and pay too little attention to advocacy for Jackson Hole. We need commissioners who are, as I am, skilled at working with our partners at the US Forest Service, National Park Service, State of Wyoming and others. I’ll keep advocacy for Teton County high on my list of things to do. I will make sure county government rises to the challenge of stewarding our best interests in the complicated and sometimes challenging larger social, economic, legal and political environment. I’ll aim for a balance of actions and policies that is grounded in what makes Jackson Hole worth fighting for.

Briefly describe:

What are your three most important political issues?

1. Conservation, 2. Affordable housing, 3. Transportation.

1. Conservation issues are always vital in Jackson Hole. Our community's vision statement gets it right when it declares, "Preserve and protect the area's ecosystem in order to ensure a healthy environment, community and economy for current and future generations." We need to fix the drinking water disaster at Hoback Junction. The eutrophication of Fish Creek in Wilson and the persistence of failed septic systems in our high groundwater setting need correction. Completion of conservation actions at the Kelly, Hwy390 and Munger Mountain State Land parcels are essential. The roster of conservation issues changes from year to year, but the magic of Jackson Hole and the vitality of our economy depend on protecting the extraordinary gifts of mother nature.

2. Affordable housing is a hard and serious challenge. Our community has embraced the challenge through deed-restricted, income qualified housing. We need to do more. Keeping at least 65% of the local workforce housed locally is essential to public safety, economic prosperity, and community integrity. I'm proud of local voters' choices in 2022 to direct \$80 million in SPET funding to all five housing support initiatives that were on that ballot. I'll work with local housing non-profits and the Jackson Teton County Housing Department to put that money to good use. I'll look for additional policies to slow the demand for housing.

3. Despite decades of warnings from all manner of transportation plans and planners, we've done a lousy job of planning for our transportation needs in Jackson Hole. I live in Wilson; as every commuter from Idaho knows, and every local who uses Highway 22 also experiences, life at "Service Level F" is a stop and go drag. Fixes: HOV Lane on 22; Transit Center at Stilson; fare-free riding on key routes at high-demand times; more commuting by bike.

Concerning public employees, what are your most important issues?

My top concern is employee morale. County employees have had a rough time in recent years. I'm the son of a 17-year Village Manager (like the Town of Jackson's Town Manager). He, and my mom, so appreciated the spirit President Kennedy voiced when he said, "Let the public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government...at any level, be able to say with pride and with honor in future years: 'I served the United States government in that hour of our nation's need.'" Teton County invests most of its annual budget in people. We'll all be better off if we expect, honor, and respect good work from public employees. I look forward to doing all of those things with all public employees, including members of the IAFF Local 5067 Jackson Hole Professional Firefighters.

Compare/Contrast yourself with your opponent(s)

I'm a 41+ year Teton County resident and a Wyoming lawyer with 28 years of service in Teton County. I've been on more boards and served more years than I can count. Additional notes below. I started by life-long love affair with Jackson Hole in 1978, when I was a student at the six-week summer high school field ecology program at the Teton Science School in Kelly. I've twice worked in the river guiding business (1981-86, as both a shuttle driver and whitewater guide, and again in 2018-23, part-time, running beautiful wooden boats for AJ DeRosa from Wilson to his riverside tipi camp). I've worked in the non-profit sector as well, including stints at the Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning, the Teton Science School, and the Snake River Fund. My kids, Madeline (27) and Reed (24) are Jackson Hole natives and very good people. They are grown and mostly fledged, giving me time to be a dedicated public servant.

I'm a 22+ year member of the Rotary Club of Jackson Hole, including past president, Rotarian of the Month and Rotarian of the Year. I'm one of six volunteer board members who led the charge to save Hungry Jack's General Store and keep it alive as a thriving community owned business. I'm on the statewide board of the Wyoming Community Foundation, helping people in all corners of our state build a better Wyoming. I was the chairman of the board of the Old Wilson Schoolhouse Community Center; we saved it from the wrecking ball and restored it to the vibrant place it is today. I served two years on the Teton County Natural Resources Stakeholders Group devising LDRs intended to put muscle behind our vision for protecting our environment. I'm a founding member of Friends of the Bridger-Teton. In 2008, I received a service award from the Wyoming State Bar, largely for my dedication to representing indigent people who were in the midst of severe mental health crises. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department gave me a service award for my first-in-Wyoming legal work to protect wintering wildlife and local people from the harm of ill-advised private feeding menageries. I'm a past president, vice-president and treasurer of the Teton County Bar Association. I served four years on the board of Jackson Hole's first non-profit daycare center, the Community Children's Project. I'm on the advisory board of Friends of Pathways and served many years on the advisory board of the Teton Raptor Center. I was on the leadership board for the successful Snake River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. There's more, but that's probably quite enough.

If your candidacy is endorsed, what assistance do you ask from the Jackson Hole Professional Firefighters?

Every candidate's best friend is word-of-mouth support from friends and neighbors. That's what I would most value from the firefighters, and I would value it highly. I received this questionnaire late on August 15, 2024; I'm turning it around in less than a day out of respect for firefighters and with the hope you will spread the word to vote for me in the August 20, 2024, Democratic Party Primary Election. Not much time! If the Jackson Hole Professional Firefighters have additional resources, I'd be grateful to learn of them and benefit from them. But, for the most part, I'd rather you focus your priorities and resources on taking care of each other and our community, and not so much on helping me or anyone else with our campaigns.

**Please answer the following (5) questions which are specifically related to public safety and firefighter safety.**

Firefighters are exposed on a frequent basis to stress, smoke, heat and various toxic substances. As a result, fire fighters are far more likely to contract heart disease, lung disease or cancer than other workers. As firefighters increasingly assume the role of the nation's leading providers of emergency medical services, they are also exposed to infectious diseases. These illnesses are now among the leading causes of death and disability for firefighters, and numerous studies have found that those diseases are occupational hazards of firefighters.

In recognition of this risk, Wyoming has enacted presumptive disability laws, which presume that cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers and certain infectious diseases contracted by firefighters are job-related for purposes of workers' compensation and disability retirement unless proven otherwise.

1. *Do you support presumptive disability laws here in Wyoming covering both professional and volunteer firefighters? Please explain.*

I do. I worked as a Workers' Comp lawyer for many years. Proving causation between job-related duties and an injury was often the center of the contested case proceedings where I was representing the injured worker. No matter how righteous the claimant was, sometimes it was very difficult to make that proof. A statutory presumption of job-related etiology for the illnesses you note in your query removes a major barrier to state-funded medical and disability support. The statutory presumption of causation is also valuable because it is grounded in reality. The work of firefighting and EMS personnel is as dangerous as you've said, and there is a long record of physical and mental injury linked to your essential work.

Wyoming became a "Right to Work" state in 1963. In 1965, the Wyoming Legislature granted Collective Bargaining rights to firefighters with Binding Arbitration. The *Jackson Hole Professional Fire Fighters* believe that because firefighters are included in "extra Hazardous" classifications of employees they need the ability to discuss public safety and firefighter health and safety with their employers, as well as pay and benefits.

2. *Do you support the Wyoming Law which has been on the books for over 50 years, granting firefighters the right to bargain with their employers with binding arbitration? Please explain.*

I do. The answer you've provided below, *in italics*, is what I wish I could have written. I agree with it.

*Binding arbitration is a useful tool, which not only assists the two parties in coming to a conclusion or settlement, but also saves time, money and energy. We need our firefighters present and ready, with their heads in the game, not worrying about salary, safety or contract disputes. The use of binding arbitration would allow an objective mediator to hear both sides of any dispute and move the two parties involved toward a mutually respectful solution.*

3. *Do you support Jackson Hole Professional Firefighters in their goal of representing the health and safety and interests of the career firefighters in Teton County and Jackson Hole?*

In 2016 the Wyoming Supreme Court ruled that Wyoming state law Title 27 Chapter 10 "*Collective Bargaining for Fire Fighters*" covers both volunteer and career fire fighters purely on basis of the definition of the term "*paid*" as listed in the definitions section of the state law. Jackson Hole Fire/EMS volunteer fire fighters are paid a nominal fee, not an hourly wage, for responding to calls

and do not have “wages, rates of pay, working conditions and all other terms and conditions of employment” also outlined multiple times in the state law. The WY Supreme Court also ignored the fact that Federal FLSA, Wyoming State law and Teton County policy clearly defines what is and is not considered an employee position. In all, volunteers are expressly defined as “not considered employees”.

4. Do you agree with the WY Supreme Courts decision? Why or why not.

I do. The case is IAFF Local Union No. 5085 v Gillette et al, July 6, 2018, recorded in book 421 of the Pacific Reporter 3<sup>rd</sup>, starting at page 1059. I agreed with it six years ago when I read about it in the local papers, and, having just done a reading of the original opinion, I still agree with it. Like the vast majority of Wyoming Supreme Court opinions, it is well-reasoned. We are fortunate to have a State Supreme Court that is tremendously disciplined, modest in their service, and made up of people who are serious legal scholars and jurists. I could go on. The issue in the case was “whether volunteer and part-time (pool) fire fighters in the Jackson Hole Fire/EMS Department and volunteer fire fighters in the Campbell County Fire Department are "fire fighters" as defined by Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 27-10-101(a), and thus are entitled to be represented in collective bargaining negotiations.” The court’s use of classic statutory interpretation tools, which I studied in detail as a law student and which I examined in my published Wyoming Land and Water Law Review casenote in 1994, shows respect for the work of the State Legislature and for the Court’s role in interpreting, not creating, law.

5. Do you support IAFF Local 5067 Jackson Hole Professional Fire Fighters in the goal of representing the health, safety and interests of the career fire fighters of Jackson and Teton County? Please explain.

I do. Though I’m so very grateful to President Biden for stepping aside in the current presidential election, I have always been proud to be a Democrat when I have seen him standing up for unions. I even took a semester of labor law when I was at UW in law school (I think the course was in the fall of 1994; I have not practiced in labor law, so please don’t hold me to the standard of a practicing labor lawyer!). In the late 1980s and early 1990’s, I was a good friend with then Teton County Commissioner Steve Thomas. He had been a labor organizer for the meat-packers earlier in his life. He would tell me stories about the conflict between the meat packing plant owners and the labor unions that were amazing –

huge conflict, often hair-raising. Unions give workers bargaining power. That is as it should be. Having bargaining power is not the same as getting everything a union wants. It's still a bargaining process. As a County Commissioner, I'll have to do the hard balancing that every good commissioner does. But I'll be very glad to work with IAFF Local 5067 Jackson Hole Professional Fire Fighters in the years ahead.

Thank you for you for answering this questionnaire; please return a copy to Austin Sessions, President IAFF Local 5067([I5067president@gmail.com](mailto:I5067president@gmail.com))