



City of Menifee

STATEMENT OF INTEREST FORM MENIFEE CITY COUNCIL

Interested persons seeking consideration for appointment to serve of the City Council of the City of Menifee are invited to complete the following statement if interest. This appointment to District 2 will expire upon the election and qualification of a successor at the next General Municipal Election, November 4, 2026.

Additional information or resumes may be attached on separate sheets. Submissions must also include a copy of the interested person's driver's license.

Submission Period: December 23, 2024, through January 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name: Laz C. Peterson

Phone: [REDACTED] **Cell Phone:** _____

Address: [REDACTED] **City:** Menifee **Zip:** 92584

Email: [REDACTED]

Years Lived in Menifee: 10 **Occupation:** Data, networking and comms.

Do you plan to run for District 2 in the 2026 General Election? Yes

APPLICATION SIGNATURE

I understand that any or all information on this form may be verified. I further understand that this document may be considered a public document.

I CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING INFORMATION IS TRUE AND CORRECT.

Laz C. Peterson
Signature 1/7/2025
Date

Return applications to: Stephanie Roseen, City Clerk, sroseen@cityofmenifee.us

Mail/Drop-Off: City of Menifee, 29844 Haun Road, Menifee, CA 92586

Applications must be received by January 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. to be considered

STATEMENT OF INTEREST

The Statement of Interest form provides an opportunity for District 2 residents to express your desire to serve on the Menifee City Council. The form should include a summary of your background, qualifications, and experience, as well as a brief explanation of your interest in and vision for representing District 2. Additional details or relevant information that support your statement may also be included.

Statement:

My name is Laz Peterson, and I am a self-employed professional in the data, networking and communications fields for nearly 30 years.

After having looked at and being dissatisfied with housing options from Santa Clarita to Temecula, my wife and I decided to move to Menifee from Rancho Cucamonga in 2015 with our infant daughter.

Four more children and ten years later, we now own two properties in different Menifee Districts, along with three small businesses that are current business license holders in the City of Menifee. It has been an enjoyable experience for us, though we have seen things change in a direction that was somewhat unexpected compared to how things were when we first arrived.

In 2022, I decided to get involved in community service, and that was a decision that I will never regret. I became passionate about the City of Menifee, its people, and most importantly its future. My wife and I have our work cut out for us with five young children 10 and under ... But we chose Menifee specifically to dig our roots in deep, to give our little ones the right environment to learn and grow, and to have positive experiences as they become contributing members to our society.

I feel that due to some very unfortunate events over the past 10 or so years (including COVID), the City of Menifee has been hit with some colossal setbacks. It will take a significant amount of time and effort, and even more community engagement and support to get to where we had expected to be 5 years ago. That is what I want to help Menifee achieve -- and then to help propel Menifee deep into its successful future.

My vision for District 2 consists of developing a long-term plan to revive the City's economic development opportunities (along with entertainment), increasing community engagement and volunteer efforts, expanding the availability of parks and lighted fields, and to help to establish Menifee's "unique identity" for decades to come.

Regardless of the outcome of this appointment process, I will be running for Menifee's District 2 Council position in 2026.

Thank you for your consideration.

~Laz Peterson

Note: please see answers to questions in "resume" attachment.

PLEASE USE NEXT PAGE FOR ADDITIONAL SPACE

Please attach resume



Please attach Drivers License

Please see "resume" attachment.

Laz C. Peterson

Menifee, CA 92584

1. Why do you want to represent District 2, and what unique goals would you bring to the Council?

Having lived in District 2 for ten years now, and with enough stomping around Menifee with my family during this time, I have developed an understanding, passion and a vision for both District 2 and for the greater Menifee area. To me, it seems that we have two clearly defined factions within each District — “legacy” Menifee and “new” Menifee.

Legacy Menifee, which I would say consists of our many beneficial clubs, non-profits and other community organizations that were established prior to the incorporation of our fine City — and most importantly a significant percentage of our most valuable community volunteers and contributors — is divided with New Menifee when it comes to community engagement. Legacy Menifee is the heart that pumps the blood through our City, has the original long-term vision, and strongly deserves our City’s support and celebration. Without this group, we lose our heart and soul. I don’t know if I have heard any Legacy Menifee resident complain about any part of the City, as it has become everything they were hoping that it would throughout its adolescent years.

New Menifee, which may include residents in older or more rural areas, but overall any/all who moved in over the past 15 or so years, that would like to see everything they were promised come to fruition. There were high expectations held by these residents, many of whom are younger families looking to dig their roots in for the distant future. With the collapse of the Krikorian entertainment complex project, increased traffic, lack of local entertainment and dining options, many high hopes explosively decompressed. When asking the average New Menifee resident what they feel about the City, I get the same response: “No entertainment, few dining options, insufficient infrastructure, insufficient parks and fields ... We just go to Temecula anyway.”

Ah, but then we have a third distinct faction: Forgotten Menifee. Forgotten Menifee consists of most rural areas, specifically Quail Valley, Romoland, and other rural areas lacking paved roads, streetlights, sidewalks, sewer or other basic infrastructure amenities. Many residents in Forgotten Menifee prefer to keep to themselves and don’t care either way. They’ve “been getting by long enough without Menifee’s help,” and they just don’t care. It’s too much for them to come out to ask for help knowing they won’t get it. Then, other residents in Forgotten Menifee are confused why they are forgotten, why there are no nearby pickleball courts, parks, or why they have to live with raw sewage backing up into the kitchen sink from their septic on a regular basis. And finally, there are others who ask, “Why did it have to come to this for us to get the help we needed?” They, too, feel like there’s no sense asking for help, because the City of Menifee does not have a clear path — or any (for that matter) — to helping. Of course,

with all the money in the world, we would have no issue dealing with any of this, but that is where the problem lies.

The goals that I would bring to City Council would specifically involve tying Menifee and its residents together so that we don't have such drastic contrasts, differences and expectations between the different parts of our City, to have more community engagement instead of estrangement, and to reignite the old-fashioned community feel that seems to be alive only in Legacy Menifee.

I feel strongly that we are in a current state of growing pains where our past mistakes are catching up to us a lot faster than we'd like, and with a batch of tens of thousands of new citizens that want answers and results. Without the resources on hand to make everything happen, there needs to be a careful, multi-pronged approach to address the concerns of each different facet of Menifee life.

2. Can you share examples of your past or current community involvement and how you would continue to engage with residents?

As a current Parks, Recreation and Trails Commissioner, I have the opportunity to serve my community in many different ways. It is a real blessing to have community involvement opportunities presented to me through this current appointment, as it helps engage those citizens who frequently attend our events and other community functions.

Outside of the Parks, Recreation and Trails Commission, I volunteer in youth sports organizations by coaching teams or officiating games ... and being able to enrich the lives of the youth is so very rewarding. Many of these citizens are only seen at events such as the Fall Festival, Dia de los Muertos Festival, Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and the Independence Celebration, and are generally not involved in other community or service-oriented events, such as Menifee Better Together or the Trot for a Cause. So, it is primarily at these non-city recreational events where I am able to engage these residents, understand their concerns, provide any help or recommendations, and assist with anything else that they might need.

Through both of these avenues, I am lucky enough to meet hundreds of people and to have the opportunity of hearing about their unique perspectives, desires and praise/criticism of our City.

3. What are the top three issues facing Menifee residents, and what specific improvements or mitigation efforts do you believe are needed?

In no particular order ...

Issue number one is the lack of usable multipurpose and baseball/softball fields, and then separately (but related), in different times of the year, the lack of usable multipurpose and baseball/softball fields with lights. For Menifee to achieve its general long-term vision, there is a real need to address this deficiency — the more time that

goes by, the more park-debt we will be accumulating, and the less desirable our City will be for its current and future residents.

Second on my list is infrastructure. I hear about septic issues in Quail Valley — in areas that are not currently to be part of EMWD's sewer project — as well as in Romoland (which has no help at all in the foreseeable future). On an almost daily basis, I hear about the traffic on Newport, or neighbors complaining about people parking in front of their homes to visit a nearby park. I hear many residents asking for a "real" dog park. Most residents I talk to regarding medical specialists are driving out of Menifee to see their doctors — some as far as Corona or southern Temecula.

The third issue would be dining and entertainment. While we do have restaurants, we still lose much-needed tax revenue and support of our local businesses to nearby cities that also have local entertainment to bolster the basic dining experience or fun family outing. And of course local jobs would be an added bonus.

4. What do you envision Menifee's "Unique Identity" to be?

Menifee should be a modern city with a classic American feel. We should have very little of our citizens' discretionary funds leaking into our neighboring cities. And we should have more frequent community-engaging events in different parts of the City. Menifee should feel more like a small, connected community rather than a busy city.

Our City should be a welcoming location for those citizens who have a micro or small business that provides goods or services that benefit other local citizens. And we should help promote their success all year round. We should also help Menifee residents with their small businesses and help them to grow, even if they have chosen to open up shop in a neighboring city.

Many years down the road, I envision a regional sports complex that many Menifee-based travel baseball, softball, football or soccer clubs can call home. This complex could be used for multiple multi-regional tournaments throughout the year — for baseball, softball, football or soccer. With amenities like this, we create a living destination for families that are serious about having their children in proper competitive sports without having to drive all around Southern California to chase that major developmental bonus.

Families with multiple children should know Menifee is a place where they can get everything they need to raise their little ones from baby to adult without having to exert excessive or unnecessary resources to do so in all directions outside of our City. Menifee should be a panacea for the "American family" to alleviate every possible pain point that they currently suffer through.

Menifee's "Unique Identity" should be: A classic American community to raise a family, start a small business, have safe and wholesome fun all year long, and to live the American dream.

5. What is your perspective on the growth Menifee has experienced?

Oh, here we go.

I feel very strongly that Menifee was visibly unprepared for the explosive growth that happened over the past 15 years (obviously in hindsight). With the population nearly tripling during this time, according to the US Census, and with infrastructure and local commerce not keeping up, it is clear that something needs to be done.

The agreements that were made with developers since the City's inception must have been quite benefiting to the developers — and not-so-much for the citizens they were developing for. I was able to witness similar growth and development while living in St. George, UT back in the 2000's. While there are many differences and similarities in circumstances, St. George went a "slow and steady" route for growth, while Menifee's developers appears to have been the ones to release the flood gates on their timeline.

Prior to the City's incorporation, it seems there was a loss of population. Shortly after, the population started to increase swiftly. But when referencing the actual population numbers and comparing them to the planned/expected population numbers in City documents at different times, the numbers do not match as closely as they should for proper planning decisions — and in some cases they were off by thousands of residents in a given year, or with 15-year estimates nearly matching up with current US Census numbers.

So, while there is definitely a variation of sources for population that should be considered for planning purposes, it is difficult to say that we had accurate data to make the best decisions during this infancy time. We should have been much more diligent about our requirements for amenities and infrastructure, and should have been far more accurately accounting for what the developers were allowed to be building (and the timing of each tract phase).

All said, that is now history that we need to fix. And that is a task for an army equipped with millions of dollars that Menifee does not have access to at this time. It is essentially going to be "running the gauntlet" while "threading the needle" at the same time. We need to do what is necessary to bring the people what they came here for, and do what we can to keep them ... all the while doing it on a \$0 budget.

I feel like we have many, many years of undoing mistakes before we have the opportunity to move forward. And this will be a long, hard road out of hell — on top of a slippery slope. The key is to keep the citizens happy in the meantime.

6. What role should the City play in attracting businesses and amenities, and how should the infrastructure to support these developments be funded?

Due to the current commercial landscape, it seems almost impossible to attract businesses/amenities to our City into commercial spaces. I feel that we need to first

start helping build up any businesses owned by our local Menifee citizens, whether they are a home-based business or otherwise.

We should also have local bazaar/markets in many locations on a regular basis, where residents can get entertainment close by their house, with local food trucks and local vendors selling products or services. This can at least start to stimulate the economy for our local Menifee business owners while we figure this one out. It would be ideal to build a history of local events hosted at parks or community centers showing Menifee residents eager to participate and spend their money in Menifee, but without having to blindly go in with a developer first just for the opportunity to roll the dice to see if it works out. (Think Krikorian.)

As far as actual developments and having those funded, we need to approach potential developers that would be willing to engage in a close partnership with the City, that would be willing to invest in the very long term. We need local medical offices, dining, entertainment, etc., but we need a developer willing to take the less greedy road and do the right thing for Menifee. Until we find one — which may take quite a long time — it makes no sense jumping into another bad decision.

The Menifee Parks system would be a great place to start having “pop-up community commerce and entertainment” events. But for more concrete businesses and amenities, I think that we are in the same boat as question 5 — we did the crime, we do the time.

Now, if we were go about funding new infrastructure to support these businesses and amenities, assuming that all available grants have been exhausted, there should be local community fundraising events in areas that should be improved for these purposes. There was actually very strong support for community fundraising for a proper restroom connected to sewer at the Gale Webb Action Sports Park by those families that frequent the attraction. Similarly, it seems that citizens who reside nearby available commercially-zoned areas that want to see things improved or made attractive for businesses or amenities could start a fundraising momentum to raise a percentage of the funds to help their own cause.

But without trust from the citizens, this approach could go either way. And it seems like the average New Menifee citizen has a less than ideal perspective of the City’s handling of its growth ... and really, it is not the citizen’s responsibility to pony up the cash. But with proper engagement and the right approach, I feel that we could rally support from the people.

7. A recent Channel 5 News report stated that nearly 80% of renters in Menifee are rent burdened, making the City one of the most impacted in the state. Would you support the development of more diverse housing options to help address this issue?

I do support development of more affordable housing options. We need planning commissioners with experience in affordable housing, primarily in areas that have seen

both the bad and the good of affordable housing. Nobody wants the affordable housing you hear about in the “projects”. But there are affordable housing options that can add a huge positive attribute to the community, enabling valuable members of our community with lower incomes to continue to be a part of Menifee.

The quality of life that someone can have when they barely make ends meet each month is quite low. That lifestyle gets old fast, and the desire to live in Menifee and sustain that becomes less attractive. These people will leave, and we will end up having vacancies that can't get filled.

Along with the local economic development strategy, we would want to create more local jobs for people with lower incomes so that they do not have to drive distances to and from work. But, same as addressing the local economic development strategy and population explosion, we still have the unfortunate position of having little to no direct control over the real state markets and the market rate per square foot for existing construction.

Another option to alleviate some of this strain on our renters would be to attract the higher paying jobs, possibly related to entertainment, near an area that could be developed out for those uses. I would suggest high skilled, high paid industrial jobs in a warehouse, but as that is a divisive topic and it is nearly impossible to know what type of tenant would ultimately reside in that type of a building, I'm not sure I would be willing to open that can of worms at this time.

All said, without a good partnership with a trusted developer (either residential for the rent-burdened citizen, or commercial/industrial for the higher paying jobs or entertainment/commercial opportunities), it's hard to say that we put this chicken before the egg.

Regardless, we will need some some experienced planning commissioners, quite a bit of luck, and a residential developer that we can actually trust and that can share our long-term vision into the future, and a positive and beneficial affordable housing option will be attainable.