



## **City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

**(Please feel free to attach your answers on a separate piece of paper)**

**1). Road and Infrastructure funding is the top priority for the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Our Board of Directors made it their top priority because the construction of new roads is a critical component to our community's health and long-term prosperity. Today, minimal property or sales tax revenue is used to fund infrastructure in Lincoln. This lack of support results in large, multi-million dollar gaps in funding and seriously constricts our ability to grow our economy.**

**How do you plan to address the need for stable general fund funding for road construction during your term?**

A primary focus of my campaign has been to encourage economic viability in Lincoln by encouraging entrepreneurs and small businesses in Lincoln and attracting new businesses to Lincoln. In my mind, infrastructure development is a key component to building a sustainable local economy and needs to be a top priority for the city's general budget. I believe, and UNL's Bureau of Business Research Report from 2005 confirms, that an investment in growth (and especially infrastructure) has a dividend effect on the local economy.

In addition to prioritizing infrastructure spending in the general budget, wheel taxes need to be better devoted to new road construction. These taxes are intended for new road construction and every dollar of them should be devoted to that task.

Third, additional funds already earmarked for new road construction but currently devoted to the Antelope Valley project will also soon be available for spending on new road construction. These funds should not be diverted from the creation of new, additional roads any second longer than needed to complete an expedited Phase I of the Antelope Valley project.

**2). Lancaster County property owners currently face a tax levy of \$2.01-per-\$100 of valuation. Of that, approx. 28-cents or 14% goes into the city.**

**Do you believe the current overall levy is too high, too low, or where it should be?**

The City levy is about where it should be. I would like to hold the line on taxes and spending in Lincoln and would prefer to find ways to help reduce the tax burden on Lincoln residents and businesses, so that they can put that money to work in the local economy.

[ AND ]

**Do you believe the City's current levy rate is adequate to support Lincoln's future?**

The City's levy will be adequate to support Lincoln's future so long as wasteful government spending is eliminated and a local economy exists that will create job growth and prosperity.

**3). What is your personal view on the use of TIF as an economic development tool?**

Unfortunately, the City Council has been left with few tools to encourage economic development. TIF financing can be a useful economic development tool, however, we need to equip the City, the Chamber, businesses, and our residents with tools that are better designed to build a viable local economy.

**4). The City of Lincoln partners with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce to operate the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development. As of today, the City's contribution for marketing Lincoln, retaining and expanding our current businesses and actively recruiting new businesses to our area is \$500,000. This money leverages a matching contribution of \$500,000 from private businesses and individuals.**

**Do you believe this is an appropriate level of economic development effort for the city of Lincoln?**

No. Our economic development budget needs to be re-prioritized as now, more than ever, our city needs to focus on encouraging success for our existing businesses and recruiting new jobs to our city.

Our city's commitment to encouraging entrepreneurs is also woefully inadequate. Given the inherit advantage of having the University of Nebraska – Lincoln in town, we need to provide more capital to programs designed to keep entrepreneurs in Lincoln. The hard working citizens of Lincoln deserve a city that focuses more on creating local job growth. I believe we can create better support for entrepreneurs and small businesses by creating entrepreneurial residencies that

set out a 3 year commitment from the City and allow local entrepreneurs to work on their businesses in Lincoln in reduced rent or rent-free locations. The City can also promote this concept by allowing for grants to these entrepreneurs that will keep them on their feet while their business is under development.

**5). Impact Fees were put in place to provide part of the solution to our growing infrastructure gap. Recently, the Mayor formed an Impact Fee task force to study their affect and to explore how Lincoln can better fund infrastructure.**

**Do you support Impact Fees?**

While I believe that impact fees may have a place in our City, I feel that they are currently stifling job growth and economic development at a time when our City is on an unsustainable economic path. At the least, we need to continue a freeze on impact fees and need to continue to investigate the effect that impact fees are having on the growth of our local economy. Our lack of progress over the last five years has not proven the case that impact fees are neutral towards economic development.

[ AND ]

**If you do support the use of Impact Fees, is the current system adequate, appropriate, and efficient?**

We must continue to refine the impact fee structure to more appropriately determine each developer's proportional share. The calculations should be updated and the true costs of development should be better determined. In particular, we may find that the method for dividing proportional costs may overweight particular project costs.

**6). A legal opinion from the City Attorney's office has allowed the Lincoln City Council to declare excess monies in the City's Special Assessment Revolving Fund as surplus. These surplus funds can then be used for other means. At current levels, the ruling produced an \$8 million windfall.**

**How should the Special Assessment Revolving Fund money be allocated?**

The fiscally responsible approach is to keep the Special Assessment Revolving Fund for a rainy day or use those funds for an infrastructure project that will pay continuing dividends over the next 10-15 years. Given the economic pressures this City will likely continue to face, we should be sure to carry ourselves like Nebraskans and save that money for the fiscal security of our City. In the event that new road construction supported by the federal or state government requires advance funding from the city, the Special Assessment Revolving Fund may serve as good seed money for such a project.

**7). The City of Lincoln is exploring building a new arena in the West Haymarket. As the organization contracted to run the Lincoln/Lancaster County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the organization tasked with growing our city, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce firmly supports the arena concept.**

**Do you support building a new arena in Lincoln?**

It goes without saying that there are a number of necessary priorities to create economic viability in Lincoln. Securing a strong private commitment and support from the University of Nebraska will be integral to moving forward on an arena project in a manner that is both fiscally responsible and best serves the citizens of Lincoln.

[ AND ]

**How should it be financed?**

See above.

**8). The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce is committed to helping businesses expand their footprint and retain their presence in Lincoln. Part of that commitment is our efforts to streamline the development process at city hall. The mayor's office has offered a Development Service Center concept as a solution. The DSC would co-locate all of the needed departments in one office at city hall with the goal of better customer interaction and tracking.**

**Do you support this concept and support creating a Development Services Center?**

I support any measure that can better improve the efficiencies of government. However, the Development Services Center may be good curtains on a bad house. In every facet, City government needs to operate more efficiently. While there is a time for process, Lincoln residents deserve a local government that is working hard to create results that will build a viable local economy. The City desperately needs to address the systemic bureaucracy that prevents meaningful progress in Lincoln

[ AND ]

**What other ideas do you have for improving the development process?**

I would prefer that the City create self-imposed timelines for particular projects seeking approval. If a development satisfies the application requirements imposed by the City, a self-expiring deadline should be established that will allow for a measurable project forecast. Similar to other governmental bodies in the U.S., the burden would then be on the City to complete its due diligence and raise objections within the self-expiring timeframe.

**9). There are several boards and committees that make recommendations to the city. Last year, the City's Charter Revision Committee recommended amending Lincoln's Charter so that it would ban City Council members who are business owners from holding contracts with the city. The recommendation eventually failed to make it onto the ballot.**

**Would you support or oppose such legislation and why?**

As a lawyer, I am taught to appreciate the complications arising from actual or apparent conflicts of interest. As such, I would support placing materiality floors on conflicted interests with City contracts. This would allow a small city like Lincoln to benefit from services that might not otherwise be available, but would also ensure that the City is not misappropriating money.

**10). What is your vision for Lincoln in the next 10 years and how do we get there?**

As stated, I believe it is important to encourage Lincoln's economic viability over the next 10 years. A city with a sincere focus on helping entrepreneurs and small businesses, while encouraging job growth, has a real chance of creating the sustainable local economy I envision.

Encouraging partnerships with the private sector and other levels of government, building better infrastructure, and pushing entrepreneurial development will all pay significant dividends in the years to come.

I also envision a City that is more efficient and more effective in providing services, and that continues to act in a fiscally responsible manner. It will be important over the next 10 years to hold the line on taxes and wasteful government spending, while promoting better transparency in our city government.

Finally, I also hope that we can continue to maintain our strong communities. I chose to move back to Lincoln because it is a great place to raise a family. To that end, we have a real competitive advantage over other cities and we will need to continue to provide safe neighborhoods, excellent parks and libraries, and quality public works.

With strong communities and strong jobs, I am sure that we will continue to build a stronger Lincoln.