



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?

First of all, we need to be sure that Lincoln gets its fair share from the Nebraska Legislature as we recapture roads money.

I have reviewed and studied Phase 1 of the Mayor's 2008 Impact Fee Task Force Committee's Report. It is obvious that impact fees cannot fully fund Lincoln's infrastructure financing gap. We need to watch closely to see what this committee recommends in the Phase 2 report. I do not support raising the property taxes or the tax levy but we need to find new ways to fund new roads. Economic development follows new road construction. (Examples are 27th Street and 84th Street). It appears that Lincoln's federal stimulus money (\$9.3 million) will be used for street repair. This may free up other federal allocated dollars for new road construction.

Another suggestion is a revolving infrastructure fund to supplement directed impact fees. The previous special assessment fund has approximately 8 million dollar surplus.

I am glad to see the passage of Senator Amanda McGill's urban growth district bill. It does authorize bonding capability to tap sales tax revenue from these areas for infrastructure needs.

This issue does not have one solution but must be addressed by the City Council in 2009.

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?

I believe the tax levy is where it should be.

[AND]

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

No, but only 14% of the property taxes go to the city budget. My bigger concern is the drop in sales tax dollars which provides 42% of support for the city budget. How do we collect sales tax off internet sales and how do we convince Lincoln citizens that they can help resolve this problem by "Buying Lincoln."

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

It is very hard to argue against the use of TIF (tax increment financing) as an urban investment tool when you see the projects that were completed with this tool. To name just a few: Lincoln Station, Apothecary and Ridnour Buildings, North Haymarket, Journal Star, Embassy Suites, No. 27th Street Corridor, Grand Theater and Old Federal, Verizon Call Center and eventually Assurity and Lincoln Flats/Bank of the West. This has brought in jobs, economic development and increase property tax of increased property values.

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?

This is an appropriate level for the current city budget. The scientific survey completed last spring by the Mayor's office revealed that the public ranks economic opportunity as the 2nd highest budget outcome priority but that it should be a partnership between the city and private organizations.

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?

[AND]

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

As I said in response to question one, Impact Fees were not meant to fund all of Lincoln's infrastructure. We need to further study this problem and analyze the final report (phase 2) from the Mayor's 2008 Impact Fee Task Force. It is expected to be completed on May 5th, 2009. So far, I am in support of decreasing the districts from 7 to 4, use of square footage or property value as a basis of calculating fees and use of a revolving fund concept. (See answer to Question 1.)

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?

This \$8 million should be used for infrastructure which was the original intent of this fund. If the \$8 million is reallocated to other infrastructure needs, that it be done, "as long as clear communication with the public is done about how the money will be used."

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?

Yes

[AND]

How should it be financed?

Most important, I do not support the use of property taxes to finance the West Haymarket Arena project. Public input on the project so far has made it very clear that Lincoln taxpayers are unwilling to pay more property taxes to support this

development. However, I do support use of the full faith and credit of the City to ensure low-interest rates for bonding some portions of the project.

This project will provide additional revenues and most importantly, good-paying jobs for our community. The financing should be a blend of public revenue streams, including taxes generated by visitors to our community and private contributions.

It should be financed by a partnership between public and private funds. I hope we can come to some agreement of financing with IMG and perhaps other private entities.

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?

Yes

[AND]

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

Part of the problem as I understand it is that the current departments responsible for development and building permits, inspections, etc. do not coordinate information and somehow have not developed the customer satisfaction culture that we in private enterprise embrace and require. It appears that these departments can better serve the citizens with improved leadership and training in the business model and that should not be a costly endeavor.

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?

I do not think you can legislate ethics. All elected boards that I have served on have had a very definitive "conflict of interest policy." As a City Council member, you should know when you are in financial or personal conflict and recuse yourself from debate and voting on that particular issue or decision.

If a Council member does not follow the Conflict of Interest Policy, or does not display transparency, it is up to the public to let their voice be heard and to not re-elect that council member.

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

In 2020, I see Lincoln as a center of culture, sports and entertainment that is tightly woven with further expansion of our great colleges (University of Nebraska at Lincoln, UNL Dental School, Nebraska Wesleyan and Union College.) Citizens of Nebraska come to Lincoln for entertainment and shopping. It is an example of excellent economic development in the Midwest. Business ventures are integrated with safe parks, trails and green and efficient buildings. Lincoln continues to be safe and healthy with quality fire and police department and excellent health care centers that focus not only on treatment but prevention of health issues.

We get there by electing outstanding city officials with the knowledge, creativity and passion to make it happen!