

LINCOLN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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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?

Without the proper road network our city cannot expand and grow. Transportation difficulties are directly related to the ability to attract top-quality, high paying jobs to our city. As a council member for the past eight years I've repeatedly supported efforts to provide more road construction dollars to the general fund. First, we need to continually support efforts that streamline the engineering process through road design, pre-purchasing of the rights-of-way before the land values increase due to interest. Second, we need to properly fund the R.U.T.S. program and encourage our counterparts on the County Board to do the same. Third, we should commit the approximately eight million dollars in the SAR fund to road and infrastructure funding that must be used where economic gain will be immediate. Fourth, we need to properly allocate wheel tax proceeds and state highway allocations towards road construction and; when necessary, renovation, in an effort to regain the public and state lawmakers trust in how Lincoln uses these dollars. Assessment Districts, as used in Lincoln a few decades ago, should be reviewed and updated to meet the growth needs of today. We've proven that our current funding structure does not meet those needs. We need to move forward with proven techniques to strategically grow our infrastructure to support the future needs in Lincoln.

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

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

(and)

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

The topic comes up nearly every time I speak with a constituent. The public's perception is that of high taxes to the property owners of Lincoln. Regardless of how our property taxes compare to other cities', the public's perception is valid and important to me. It is the responsibility of the elected body to present a balanced budget and what some often forget, is a budget that's affordable to the tax payers. I believe our tax levy is affordable and in today's difficult economic times, appropriate to provide necessary services. As to the question of adequacy to support our future; in tough budget years, it is better to trim government's size to meet the revenue available. When done responsibly you find that many of the services that were implemented in good times no longer are necessary in tough times. As the economy begins to improve and revenues increase, a base budget can be funded and additional revenues applied to growth.

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

TIF is an outstanding tool when used responsibly. I do not support the use of TIF for retail unless the retail will draw new business to Lincoln. In my eight years on the council I'm proud of my conservative votes in the use of TIF and will continue applying the 'but-for' test to potential TIF projects and assessing the ultimate and long term value to the city.

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 the private businesses and individuals.

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

I do not believe this level of funding is adequate to serve the growth of Lincoln. For a city of our size we should be strategically increasing the contribution. My goal within the next four years would be to increase the amount to one million dollars. We must be prepared in the very near future to discuss an increase. I'm very proud of the fact that I introduced the doubling of the city's contribution to LPED a few years ago which resulted in Verizon, Perot Systems and many others locating and expanding business in Lincoln.

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 effect 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?

I do not support our Impact **TAX** structure. It was meant to be fair, it was designed to eliminate arbitrary negotiations, and it was expected to provide infrastructure needs prior to development. They have failed in every respect. A formula for development was presented to the administration during the discussion of impact fees and was ignored. In my opinion, the Impact **TAX** structure should be eliminated over the course of the next two years while phasing in a more equitable and sustainable structure.

6.) A legal opinion from the City Attorney's office has allowed the Lincoln City Council to declare the 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?

As I answered in a previous question, my goal would be for the City Council to pass a resolution this spring identifying the \$8 million dollars as surplus with a new resolution directing the monies to be spent on infrastructure projects where a near immediate return is projected. The resolution would also allow for flexibility in the use of the funds as an incentive gap-filler for specific economic development projects.

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 Conventions & 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?

(and)

How should it be financed?

I do support the construction of an arena in the West Haymarket area. I've been supportive throughout the process and my votes affirm that support. The taxpayers of Lincoln are currently covering the budget shortfall of the Pershing Center at roughly the amount of \$500 thousand dollars annually. This budget shortfall will continue to grow as well as the ever increasing need for facility upgrades and infrastructure replacement. The mechanical replacements and roof repairs alone will skyrocket into the millions of dollars and we will still have a structure that doesn't come near to meeting the demands of an ever changing market. I'd much rather invest those dollars into a new facility and once completed, return the Pershing Center and the land back to the property tax rolls through redevelopment.

Financing through both the public and private realm is a much more advantageous option for municipalities today. On-going discussions with both the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and ISG should be encouraged. My conversations with citizens throughout Lincoln shows little support for a publicly developed arena and the most encouraging comments resulted from further discussions involving private

sector development and ownership. A tremendous amount of work will need to be done for this project to be successful and I'm committed supporting its success.

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 collocate all of the needed departments on 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?
(and)

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

I fully support any reasonable efforts to improve the development process at city hall. However, throwing an undetermined amount of dollars that could reach into the millions at a problem is not the answer. With today's technology more and more businesses are finding that employees don't need to be next to each other in cubicles or conference tables to be efficient. In fact, many businesses are allowing their employees the flexibility to work from home through technology thus saving tremendous overhead costs. I've yet to talk to a developer or builder in this community that suggests their problems will be eliminated or reduced by having various departments co-locate. What they suggest is more cultural in nature; a more customer friendly attitude; a willingness to offer suggestions and solutions to make their project move forward rather than only identifying roadblocks and obstacles. My ideas for improvement are quite simple: a Mayoral aide charged with walking difficult projects through the process, an aide with the authority to make things happen. This can be done with no additional staff and with little additional costs. Second, a review of our current software; if it's obsolete, replace it. If it requires an upgrade, upgrade it. Third, seek formal input from developers, architects, engineers and builders regarding ways to improve Lincoln's development process, including identifying communities who have effective development processes to learn from.

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 to the ballot.

Would you support or oppose such legislation and why?

I continue to oppose this legislation because it unfairly singles out a certain population in our community from holding a city elected office. When this issue was before the council last year I supported legislation that provided even greater transparency to the bidding and contracting process. I believe it is incumbent on all elected representatives to follow a path of ethical behavior especially when dealing with our citizen's tax dollars and the perceptions of impropriety. I have personally chosen not to enter into city contracts as a business person but it should be up to each elected official to make that choice

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

I see a very bright future for the city of Lincoln. We are poised for success for one very good reason, our people. In my eight years on the City Council I've literally met thousands of citizens who have very expressed opinions on the functionality of city government. Their passion for Lincoln's success revitalizes me regularly.

Ten years is a mere blip on our radar. We need to be focusing our efforts not only on 10 year increments but on 25 year cycles. Technology will continue to press us towards more thought provoking challenges. We will need to better partner with those organizations that provide significant resources to our community, the University of Nebraska, the State of Nebraska and of course the private sector.

My hope would be that in 10 years we've grown well beyond the debate of core revitalization versus growth at our fringe. We need to continue to refine the role of local government, identifying wants versus needs while maintaining the high quality of life that Lincolniters have grown to treasure and new citizens will come to appreciate.

In 10 years I see a Lincoln that has grown to meet the needs of its citizens, where graduates of our great educational institutions find careers here in Lincoln where they grew up or where they've moved for

better opportunities. In part, the community where I grew up, Lincoln NE. We didn't get to where we are today because of greed, divisiveness or politics. We're here today because we've recognized ourselves as a community that cares for one another, that works towards common goals, and places a high degree of value on community.