



**Lancaster County Board of Commissioners Candidate
Questionnaire – BRENT SMOYER**

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

1). In our Six Statements of Core Policy, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce encourages fiscal responsibility and the pursuit of government efficiencies.

In what ways can Lancaster County become more efficient in its operations?

Lancaster County can become more efficient in a number of ways, and while the following is not a comprehensive list by any means, it does serve as a starting point.

- A) Seek review and reevaluation of the County's numerous inter-local agreements. Many of these contracts have not been reviewed or adjusted since the 1960's. I believe its time we look them over and make sure we are getting the best deal possible for taxpayers.
- B) Consider various options for department consolidation both in the County itself, and in conjunction with the city, thus reducing redundancy in services and functions leading to a leaner government on all fronts.
- C) Seek options for revenue that doesn't rest on the backs of taxpayers. One example includes enrolling the Lancaster County Sheriffs office in a national police auction system that allows for the sale of used cars and equipment to other police entities nation wide. This provides a return on current equipment that can help cut the cost of new items reducing the burden on the County and the taxpayers.

2). A new arena in the West Haymarket is the #1 short-term priority for the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. The new facility would greatly enhance the ability of the Lincoln Convention & Visitors Bureau to attract people, events, and tourism dollars to Lincoln.

How can the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners partner with the City of Lincoln to see this project to completion?

I believe the best way the County Board can assist with the project (as they are not directly involved with the City/University run JPA) is to place their emphasis on working to maintain and build new infrastructure so the arena can be quickly and easily accessed once it is completed. Ease of access can go a long way to making a venue that much more successful. I realize this is more of a post-completion goal, but given the structure of the JPA I believe this is the greatest good the County can do to help the Arena succeed. Of course there are also matters of business zoning and cooperation with the Lancaster Event Center, with which the county can greatly assist, but in my mind working in conjunction with the city to ensure proper access and infrastructure is the greatest way the County can help.

Given the City's decision to build a new arena in the West Haymarket, what is your vision for the future of the Lancaster Events Center?

I envision the Event Center functioning as it always has, and in fact, continuing to expand. There is no reason that the two venues should have even a hint of antagonism toward one another. Both will be able to serve multiple functions, some the same, and some entirely different, but with scheduling, logistics, and special needs that accompany each individual event there is no reason to believe that both venues will remain important attractions. I think we will be very lucky to have such great venues in our County, and I believe that the administrators of both will work together to ensure the success not only of the Event Center and Arena, but of the community as a whole.

3). The Lincoln Chamber of Commerce has championed the effort to devote more money to road and infrastructure funding at all levels of government. The Chamber's Board of Directors has deemed it the #1 long-term priority for future of Lincoln.

As a County Board member, are you willing to devote more money to expanding roads and infrastructure both inside and outside the City's limits?

Without a doubt I would be willing to allocate more money to improving the infrastructure in Lancaster County. It has always been part of my platform to increase economic development in the county, and one of the keys to such development is a quality infrastructure.

How would you fund this effort at the County level?

My preferred method of finding and allocating funds for infrastructure development is to first find cuts and efficiencies in the county budget so more money would be available to be diverted to roads. Secondly, I would zealously pursue any federal or state grants for such projects as the South and East beltways. While money is tight for both the state and federal Roads Departments, it won't remain that way forever. The key is to be prepared to 'pounce' when the funds do become available so we may be placed at the top of the list.

I do know a common suggestion for road funding has been a county wheel tax. I admit that I cannot in good conscience endorse such an approach. The current economic climate is no time to be increasing costs on the vehicles that families and businesses count on everyday. Additionally, it is my fear that such a fee, while minimal now in the light of the already massive cost of vehicle registration in Nebraska, could skyrocket in the future. Much as Lincoln's wheel tax has jumped to around \$58 and especially in light of the proposed Omaha wheel tax increase of nearly \$40 on top of what they currently pay, the county wheel tax could become a dangerous temptation for later boards if they are hit with tough times.

4). Lancaster County currently contributes \$10,000 to the Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development.

Do you feel this is the appropriate level of contribution towards economic development by the County Board?

Given the current economic climate, I would have to say yes, this is enough simply because the budget is tight right now. That is not to say that I don't wish to see this number increased when the County's budget outlook improves. I would very much like to see this amount increased in the future when we are in a more stable economy. Economic development is one of my top priorities in Lancaster County and anything the county can do to help accelerate that should be done, but we need to be cautious in our current fragile economy.

If not, how will you work to either increase or decrease this level of funding?

In finding appropriate cuts and efficiencies in the County budget, we can find and reallocate funds to various worthwhile projects like the Economic Development Partnership and greater infrastructure improvements.

5). What will be the biggest challenge facing the Lancaster County over the next 5 years?

The biggest challenge for the County will be balancing the budget and holding the line on taxes. We are still in a rough economy, and it will take some years to get it back to the prosperity we are used to. This is where we must work as a team to keep taxes low so we can keep people in our communities, increase the tax base through economic development, and institute strategic cuts in the government so as to make it leaner, and more efficient while not causing a catastrophic drop in the services taxpayers need.