

Respondent

< 10 Anonymous >

158:37
Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

*

Brian S Varga, Medicine Hat

2. What active role have you played to improve our community prior to running for council/mayor?

*

In my time before I became a Councillor I was very involved with the hockey community. Much of the time was spent as a coach along with a couple of years as the GM of Medicine Hat Minor Hockey. Coaching kids to be the best they could be was very important to me especially after playing Junior for the Tigers and Professionally in Germany for six years. Experience as a player and a coach helped to improve our kids in this community.

3. What initiatives would you propose to improve tourism, investment attraction and development to our municipality and region and support business recovery during/after the pandemic? *

Tourism is a very important part for our community when it comes to economic development. The more tourists spent time in our community the more they spend their money in our community. It is very important to promote what we have in our City. Tourism

Medicine Hat does a great job in promoting our City. One area that I would like to continue to promote is our Sports Tourism area. We have great facilities to host events, we also have the best volunteers anywhere so hosting any event in our City generates excitement and a culture that no one can do it better than our city. I hope that Council will continue to offer incentives to existing businesses and new ventures that might like to set up shop to improve their business or a new business coming in to set up shop. As the pandemic slowly goes away I hope the City can help these businesses, in anyway possible to recover from this tough time.

4. In Medicine Hat, businesses pay a higher proportion of property taxes compared to the residential sector. Medicine Hat's tax gap of 2.35% is one of the highest in Alberta. What is your position on the current approach to taxation and your thoughts on potential strategies to narrow this gap?

*

I believe that we are trying to improve the ratio every year in our city to become closer with taxes. Taking into consideration that residential has no way of earning income or creating expenses from a residential property. Where, a business creates income because of their business, claims expenses and finds ways to save money at tax time. Residential does not have some of these options but Council is trying every year to bring the ratio closer together helping the commercial and business section.

5. If elected, what specific steps would you take to encourage & promote entrepreneurship within the region?

*

I would promote a working relationship with our College to bring in programs that are essential for our students to study and educate them to gain experience and knowledge to place them into the work world in our community. I would also advocate with our provincial government to help bring education to our College that is vital to our students that gets them into the workforce in our community

6. What is your stance on COVID-19 related laws that mandate requirements, including masks and vaccine passports?

*

I believe that the provincial Government downloaded too much to the municipalities to take care of. We were left to make up mask bylaws because they would not. The science showed that masks work so I had no problem instituting the Bylaw. I believe it brought our numbers down and kept more people safe. I believe that a vaccine passport would help the ones that are totally vaccinated to get back to some normalcy. This passport would create a safer experience for those that are totally vaccinated and unfortunately, others not to be allowed to do things that are normal to the rest. The passport is a new normal.

7. What is your plan for publicly-funded services (examples would include Medicine Hat Public Library, power plant, facilities) if elected?

*

Because of the pandemic over the past 18 months I believe it is important to examine how these services have been delivered and what the cost was to deliver them. These services should be examined and a plan of action for the future should be implemented from this examination. Facts should be viewed as essential and how monies were made and spent would justify where we go in the future for these services. A thorough report should be brought to Council for examination and then actions put into place for the future.

8. How important is it for our region to have a local Community College? What specific steps could the municipality do to work better with Medicine Hat College to provide ongoing opportunities for future learners?

*

The City should continue to advocate to the Provincial Government to bring programs and money to our local College that are vital for our students and for the city to improve our workforce in areas that the businesses feel are needed in our community. Advocacy is important at this time for our College.

9. How will you attract newcomers to the district and address the needs for a skilled workforce? *

I believe that we continue to show newcomers or interested parties that this is a great place to live. Low taxes, low utilities, great facilities, great weather, transportation ease from north to south, east to west and all the amenities that a big city has to offer in a smaller environment like ours. I would brag about the people who live and work here and how great they are to newcomers in this community. Make them feel welcome and express to them that they are an important part of this City by coming here.

10. What is your stance on the importance of mental health & wellness support in our region? What ideas, implementations, and initiatives would you put forward to improve the overall mental health & wellbeing of our community?

*

Again a lot of the matters that mental health brings and has happen in our community is and should be dealt with by the province or the Feds. Through bylaws we can provide a place for these organizations but we do not direct these agencies to do what we say. They are independent of the city and should be kept that way. The City should only get involved if a viable location is needed. Should be left to the organizations how they run their affairs.

11. How will you further diversity and inclusion initiatives in our region, as it relates to each of the pillars in the Chamber's Vote Prosperity Platform: <https://www.medicinehatchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/>
(<https://www.medicinehatchamber.com/voteprosperity2021/>)

*

As far as Innovation and Competitive Strategy pillar the City over the last two years has worked hard to reduce red tape. We introduced an inside business unit called Invest Medicine Hat. Invest MH is a one stop entity that helps seeks out and help businesses bring their ideas and investments to Medicine Hat. Invest MH takes them through a process from start to hopefully in the end to the finish line. My hopes is that we continue to offer incentives to not only new businesses but to our existing businesses that might need help to realize their dreams for the future and help with their growth strategies. The City should continue to advocate the provincial government to improve our education strategies that are beneficial to the children in our school system. Infrastructure Development should be a top priority now and into the future. We have undertaken an infrastructure inventory below and above ground. Through this process we have seen a number of Federal and Provincial grants awarded to our City to improve this old infrastructure. We have received 18.2 million dollars to fix many different infrastructure project, along with many new projects being started and completed with only 20% of City funds going into some projects. We have leveraged these funds and have established 23 million to fund many other projects. Some projects you do not see the results because they are under the ground while some like the Pickelball Courts, BMX starting Gate, Athletic park and many new trails come to mind as City facility upgrades. The third pillar Imaging and Branding is the most important for expressing what our City has to offer to all who comes here. Medicine Hat has been long know for having some of the best facilities in the province and in Canada for that matter. Our new initiative in the "Waterfront District" should enhance many investors to take a look at this new development. Although it might not happen over night I believe we must stay strong and see it through till its completion. Tourism, especially Sports Tourism should continue to be driven and improved upon. Through our Sports and Events Council, help in hosting as many events as possible should be the key to creating huge economic impacts to our city with any event that is hosted in our city. 330 days of sunshine is to our advantage and should be promoted as such and our City should be portrayed as the place you want to Live, Work and Play. The pillar of workforce development should be an on going initiative as we move along into the future. The city's various departments that exist internally have done a good job in bringing in key people to help our many departments. I believe that the City should continue to work with the College to find efficiencies and strategies to to work together on finding areas of study that would benefit the workforce needed in our City. I really believe the City and the College need to figure out a strategy with the engaged stakeholders to get people back to work. People need to work to feel their worth in the community. Skilled labor is hard to find, so one way to find it is to teach it. We have to find ways to do this with help from the College. The Business and Financial support pillar is going to be important as we slowly come out of Covid. We need to continue to find ways to help our existing businesses. Whether it be direct support through equipment, web-design, product enhancement, services provided, we should continue to have grants available through Grant applications to such businesses that have innovative ideas, product awareness, worker retention and recruiting or it helps with funding and repayment plans to help get their businesses to the next level.

The City should always seek to obtain grants from the Feds and the Province to help our small business community. The city will only move forward if our small business society succeeds well into the future and I hope the City will be there to help. My views on Chamber Pillars

12. On a municipal level, how do you intend to address climate change and pollution?

*

I think our city is doing its best in this department of climate change. We continue to offer incentives to our residents in the Hat Smart program. Excitement is the introduction as the 2nd Hub for Hydrogen in Canada and the prospect of creating a carbon capture system that could bring jobs and dollars being invested in our city. We continue to improve our recycle program. We will continue to work on innovative ways to tackle these issues as they present themselves.

13. What strategies will you use to communicate and engage with the community and remain accountable to the citizens?

*

Communication is vital to many of our residents in our City. The City has just introduced a new website that helps people connect to the right person by the click of a button. We will continue to make all our decisions that are necessary in our open council sessions. No decisions are made behind closed doors. Every issue that is necessary to be made for our residents is done in a transparent matter in open council sessions. Accountability is one of my core values and I intend to be accountable for all my actions and decisions to the citizens if asked.

14. Are there any other issues you wish to address or highlight that were not mentioned in the questions above?

*

I believe that this past council was a great team. We accomplished many things and help our citizens as much as possible when we could during this time with Covid. We kept our financial situation in check, reduced vehicle inventory, and reduced staff through attrition. Continued to work on our Accelerated Financial Fit Initiatives to save money to reduce our yearly shortfall. That is why I believe experience at the Councillor level is vital for our council to move forward into the future of this city and I hope that I can be voted back in for a third term as Councillor for the City of Medicine Hat to continue that work for the next 4 years.