

Respondent

< 11 Anonymous >

36:19
Time to complete

1. Please enter your full name and municipality.

*

Rockford Rutledge

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

*

I moved here in 1997 to attend the Medicine Hat College. After 3 years I went into the Oilfield where was in a number of supervisory and management roles, both domestic and international. After the Oilfield slowed I started a small business hat has been serving our community since 2017.

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? *

I would encourage the collaboration of Invest Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat Tourism and tourism partners to market Medicine Hat as a desirable destination for events, entertainment, conferences, sport tourism as well as to develop additional resources to maintain a captive tourism audience. I would encourage a task force (I believe the Tourism Information Group was established pre-COVID) to

network to improve these services.

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?

*

Taking a strategic approach to property assessment protocols and putting in place equitable taxation based on the assessment value of the structure. Cut back wasteful spending by making bold choices to strive for ongoing prosperity in Medicine Hat. The city needs to get out of the business of being in business, for example selling off vacuum trucks would not only save operating costs, but also, administration and facility costs. These savings in turn could help lower tax without increasing residential tax.

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

*

As an entrepreneur myself, I would encourage the Medicine Hat College and the school boards to promote programs surrounding entrepreneurship. I would encourage B2B marketing to develop and expand the community and create healthy competition within businesses. Some economic development is hindered by improper zoning, so a good hard look at how the city is currently zoned may help in encouraging new business. Ensure current and future businesses have access to the resources required to start up and improve on their business. Foster an ideology of "open for business attitude:" by cutting red tape and barriers at the administration level. Taking a good hard look at utility fees and perhaps incentivizing new entrepreneurs.

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

*

COVID-19 has changed the way we live for many reasons, I support letting people make decisions about their own health. Masks and vaccinations have lead to division and anger within our community. Bill C66, a public health amendment act received royal ascent in June of 2021 implemented provisions removing power to order mandatory immunization in Alberta. If the city is required to make a decision, I would recommend holding a meeting or survey to determine how the citizens feel on these issues, and however much divided, make a decision based on what is best for our community based on the results.

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

*

My plan is to constantly evaluate and scrutinize the value and costs of these services to ensure they are well utilized and viable, not just today but in 5 or 10 years. Working with each facility to determine what, if any improvements need to be made to ensure the publicly funded services continue to align with the economic objectives of the city. I always try to maintain an open mind on this topic as these are services which service a variety of people in our community.

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?

*

I don't believe it should be a priority at this time to build a municipally funded community college. I believe the city needs to work with the Medicine Hat College to offer those programs to better utilize the existing facility and keep in mind other objectives. Encourage the creation of a perpetual cycle for sustainability in Medicine Hat. I would advocate to implement strategies with the Medicine Hat College which in turn could result in more young adults and entrepreneurs wanting to stay in a thriving community. (for example the BA program in partnership with Mount Royal was discontinued)

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

By advocating for an industrial and logistics park. Big industry attracts families and often offer high paying employment. Having somewhere to put industry when they look at Medicine Hat, makes the community that much more attractive. Starting with land purchase and zoning. Actual infrastructure could wait until the right candidate brings it in. Encouraging the college to attract international students, and work with the Chamber to attract, develop and maintain newcomers to the community.

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?

*

Our largest resource in our community is our people, when someone relies on mental health and wellness, it may be difficult to find what they're looking for. By minimizing duplication through collaboration, it may be easier to access the services offered in Medicine Hat. An example would be one unified website listing all the resources available, such as AHS' addiction and mental health in the Provincial Building, peer support groups (like Our Collective Journey, The Inner Man Project), Salvation Army and the Women's Shelter to name a few. Individuals experience mental health and wellness situations for varying reasons, food, shelter, abusive situations or even children may require assistance. One unified voice may help alleviate additional stressors when an individual experiences this type of malady.

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/voteprosperty2021/> (<https://www.medicinehatchamber.com/voteprosperty2021/>)

*

Support for diversity and inclusion is important and complex. Initiatives should be designed to recognize, increase and celebrate

diversity. Examples include education in cultural diversity, human rights, workplace rights, disability awareness and respect in the workplace. I believe the council should come together and create a framework on moving forward, including diversifying businesses that come in. Pillar 1: Strengthening business competitiveness – I believe there is something critical in business with establishing healthy competitiveness, sure two local businesses may have similar offerings, however, if they work together to discover each others strengths and weaknesses and build a healthy relationship, when a customer has a specific request that one business may not be able to offer, they may refer that same customer to their competitor and in turn maintain a healthy, local economy. Pillar 2: Growing Business Partnerships – Promoting existing groups and collaborating with those groups as a community representative is imperative to a prosperous community. I would refer businesses to retain a Chamber membership as they offer a variety of networking opportunities. Working with the business community is crucial to fact finding when creating programs, services or policies which may directly impact businesses in our community. Perhaps even working with the private sector to build better community partnerships, my example earlier, in selling off vacuum trucks, allows for a thriving economy in which the public sector works with the local private sector to get a job done, rather than having equipment depreciate in a city lot. Pillar 3: Building Healthy Communities – Medicine Hat does a great job with promoting the support local movement, the shopYHX site is a tool local business can access to get straight the consumer. Perhaps advocating for additional marketing of this movement would get the message out that our community is open for business and are working together. Building a healthy overall community takes time, developing a master plan, which includes multi-modal transportation, developing and expanding on existing organizations and events and researching affordable housing in Medicine Hat to engage/ encourage citizens from all walks of life to feel confident that they're part of a thriving community. We do already have so much going for us here. Pillar 4: Improving Government Accountability – Being an elected decision maker is an honor, people vote in specific council members as they believe they may be like minded and will represent the voter's views. To start, any elected official who may perceive or have a direct conflict with a decision at council level should be disclosed, maintaining an unbiased view. Any council member that is directly involved in a business that may be involved in an RFP process must remove themselves from the vote. When considering projects, it may also be a good way to create accountability as elected officials to provide citizens and businesses the opportunity to have a voice in the project which may directly impact their neighborhood. Gathering information from those in specific industries or neighborhoods will help those involved feel a better sense of community pride and involvement by having a relationship with council. Open houses or surveys are two examples I can think of.

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

*

Promoting and improving the HAT Smart program. I accessed the program when I installed solar panels on my home and reduced my personal carbon footprint significantly. I would improve efforts to make Medicine Hat a hydrogen hub, which would reduce CO2 emissions. Water is a valuable resource, incorporating xeriscaping into city green space and encouraging citizens to incorporate this

water reducing technique into their own landscape would help harness this resource. Other methods to gather water is through Bioswale, which not only beautifies the landscape, but also helps lower the impact on water consumption in landscaping. Storm water management can be a focal point as a water feature in a green space. Tree planting offers shade as well, especially in our semi-arid climate, helping in water reduction within city limits will leave water for Agriculture within our region. Taking action to reduce emissions through a multi-modal transportation system is a big factor in pollution reduction. Combining our beautiful trail system with public transportation and cycling can offer pollution reduction. Communicating with Hatters through an effective marketing campaign or contesting can entice citizens to get on board.

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

*

This is a tricky question as council don't primarily speak on behalf of the council. Communication for council comes from the Mayor and/or city Administration. I would advocate to communicate and engage with the community through social media, discussions and presence at local trade shows and a unified voice from City Hall. Open house style public engagement sessions, direct mail to a diverse groups and organizations would help in maintaining community spirit and engagement. Members in the community may feel more confident in decisions made by council if they are engaged, propelling a positive feeling towards the future of the city.

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

*

I would encourage brownfield redevelopment in and around the city. "Redevelopment of brownfield sites has many economic, social and environmental benefits for the property owner, adjacent land owners and the community as a whole. A vacant, derelict or underutilized site tends to have a negative impact on the surrounding area in several ways. It is likely to negatively affect the value of nearby properties, and may discourage new development. It can also potentially attract vagrancy and criminal activity. Furthermore, if the site was previously used for a commercial or industrial purpose, there may be contaminants such as fuel or chemicals in the ground which can leach into groundwater and/or become airborne. Remediation of such a site diminishes (in some cases, may reverse) the environmental damage. This can improve property values, increase tax revenue for the municipality and help to strengthen the community fabric. Breathing new life into brownfield areas helps improve public safety and can lead to more residential and green

space. In the case of new commercial development on the remediated site, it may mean additional employment opportunities, which can benefit the community as a whole." -Quote taken from the City's Municipal Development Plan.