



Candidate Questionnaire

2020 Primary Election

The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce strongly encourages engagement between elected officials and chamber members as a way to inform and to be informed on issues of interest and impact to the chamber community. Local non-partisan elections are a great opportunity to deepen our understanding of each other.

While the Chamber will not be making any candidate endorsements, we seek to inform our members and voters by engaging in dialogue with those interested in serving and representing our community. We'll offer a number of opportunities to do so in the weeks leading up to election day. The first of these is this candidate questionnaire.

We're inviting each candidate running for office on the 2020 primary election ballot (opposed or unopposed) to submit their response to the following questions in writing. These questions have been formed by the Chamber's *Business Advocacy Council*, a diverse group of business and community leaders, through a deliberative process with issues of interest and impact on our business community and our local economy in mind.

Questions and answers will be published unedited on the Springfield Chamber's digital news platforms including the chamber website (www.springfield-chamber.org), the chamber's online news *The Bottom Line* (www.springfieldbottomline.com), and in the *Member Connect* a weekly bulletin distributed via email.

If you wish to participate in this opportunity to inform and engage with the chamber community, please **submit your answers in writing no later than Wednesday, March 18th to max@springfield-chamber.org.**

Candidate Information

Full Name: *Mike Eyster*

Position Running for: *Mayor, Springfield*

Campaign Email: *MikeEysterForMayor@gmail.com*

Campaign Website (if applicable): *MikeEysterForMayor.com*

Endorsements (if applicable): *Corkey Gourley, Steve Cornacchia, John DeWenter, Nancie Koerber, Nancy Golden, John Lively, Todd Mann, Jim Cupples, Cynthia Pappas, John Halgren, Sally Storm, and others available on website: MikeEysterforMayor.com*

Personal/Background

- 1. Please provide a brief statement on your personal, professional and service record in service to and support of the business community.**

My most recent professional career experience was serving as Senior Associate Vice President for Student Life at UO from which I recently retired. I also served as the Director of University Housing as well as the Executive Director of the University Health Center. In addition to my roles on the UO campus, I was appointed as one of the certified primary incident commanders working in collaboration with community and campus partners to handle emergency response for issues such as pandemic crisis preparation/response; earthquake; active shooter, and fire. Prior to coming to the UO, I served in leadership positions on 5 other campuses around the country, advancing to a higher level of responsibility with each new position. My work in higher education involved overseeing large auxiliary operations within a university. Auxiliary operations are multi-million dollar business enterprises within the university that must generate revenue and be self-supporting and/or generate revenue back to the general fund of the university. In addition to my professional career, I have served on or chaired multiple boards, including the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce (chair), Lane Transit District (chair), the City Club of Springfield (president), Springfield Chamber Economic Development Committee (chair), Springfield Utility Board (vice-chair), Lane Community College Board of Education (chair), Springfield Renaissance Development Corporation (president), and Better Eugene Springfield Transportation (immediate past president). I was also the long-time chair of the Springfield Chamber Economic Development Committee and a former Board member of Travel Lane County (formerly CVALCO).

Business, Economic Development, Community

- 1. In your view, what is economic development and why is it important to our community?**

On the macro level, economic development is accomplished through collaboration, the cultivation of a thriving economy, and community vision. On the micro level economic development occurs when residents have a job, can pay for a home, can support their children or kids with educational pursuits, occasionally go on a vacation, and have a sense of financial security.

Economic development is the engine that drives the vitality of our community. Broadly, I think of it as the creation of wealth through successful business activity—the outcome of which manifests in jobs; a tax base that supports essential municipal services; a high quality of life; and a thriving, vibrant community. Economic development is often thought of as attracting, retaining and helping existing businesses to expand.

However, it is much more than that:

Economic development is best accomplished when political leaders, business leaders, non-profits, and other agencies collaborate to promote and encourage economic development. The City and the Chamber need to work hand in hand to extend and expand collaborative opportunities that create the kind of climate that nurtures business. I will work tirelessly with the Chamber and businesses on recovery and revitalization in the wake of COVID-19. We will seek ways to stimulate entrepreneurship, revitalization, and job creation. We will also explore ways to strengthen current workforce development, new partnerships with businesses, and new partnerships with community partners that train our workforce. This work will take place with a sense of urgency.

Economic development is most effective when it is approached broadly, and there is recognition that cultivating a thriving economy requires intentionally crafting public policy, talent development, and quality public services to contribute to building a flourishing economy. Cultivation also includes supporting innovation district type businesses, and infrastructure such as walkable cities with good transit, access to high-speed low cost fiber, and exciting venues for local residents. A high performing school district and business participation in talent development are also important elements of cultivating economic development. Finally, law enforcement, fire and life safety are essential elements of economic development.

Economic development is accomplished through vision. Economic development is deeply linked to a community's recognition that economic development contributes to the greater good of the entire community. As collaboration and intentional cultivation create the fertile business environment that supports and attracts business—the businesses involved in economic development prosper. Leaders in those businesses also care deeply about their community and contribute to the community in a wide variety of ways that don't directly relate to their own business—which expands the vitality of successful business activity throughout public and private sectors. As a community, we have tremendous assets including our expertise in advanced timber manufacturing, technology, our parks and recreation system, the food and beverage industry, health care, and medical technology. We need to continue to support innovation with these critical sectors at the same time as invite new partners for involvement.

When done well, this virtuous cycle utilizes the existing assets of a community to attract greater and more vibrant, diverse assets to the community.

2. What is your vision for Springfield, and what do you see as the three most significant challenges, opportunities, and solutions to achieving that vision?

Vision

My vision for Springfield will be a shared vision. It will involve the creation of a thriving, healthy community from Glenwood to Thurston and throughout all areas of Springfield, taking into the consideration the recovery from the health impact and financial devastation of COVID-19. Springfield's recent experience of downtown revitalization after a decades-long economic decline will serve the community well, as we bounce back from COVID-19. Springfield will be a premier destination with a distinct Springfield feel, honoring our history, and progressively planning for our future. Streets will be well repaired, well maintained, and safe. Business leaders, citizens, and community partners will be asked regularly for their suggestions and ideas. There will be a substantial increase in *affordable housing* options in Springfield. Home ownership will be available for any family that wants to plant roots in our community. There will be a substantial increase in housing of *all types* in Springfield. Crime, including petty and property crime will be reduced. City government will be characterized as visionary, strategic, effective and transparent. City resources (staff time, energy, effort and tax dollars) will be invested strategically on issues that are important to the residents of Springfield. As Springfield becomes more diverse, that diversity will be honored and celebrated. All Springfielders will feel safe and will be full participants in the educational, economic, recreational and civic life of Springfield. The City will seek practical and common-sense ways to reduce our carbon footprint in the way the city conducts its work and does its business. There will be ample job opportunities for Springfielders.

Significant Challenges, Opportunities and Solutions

Even prior to COVID-19, our local economy was and has been fragile. Recent revitalization in our downtown has been exciting; however, the Springfield economy has been fragile for some time and required attention before COVID-19.

Almost two years before COVID-19 occurred, City of Springfield Finance Director Bob Duey warned the City Council of a disturbing and unsustainable trend regarding the financial viability of the city. He warned of a trend of rising expenses and declining revenues. Clearly this trend is unsustainable.

In addition, between 2010 and 2018, the growth rate of Springfield was 2.5%. During this period, consider the following city growth rates in our region: Roseburg at 17.2%, Creswell 8.4%, Junction City 13.6%, and Eugene at 8.6%. Only Oakridge had a slower rate of growth at 2.3%. Moderate growth in population is vital for the economic vitality of the city. These were boom years for our economy, yet Springfield lagged behind. Why is Springfield underperforming in relation to the communities around us?

Another challenge—or symptom of underperformance: There has been an unprecedented drop in enrollment at the Springfield School District for the past two years.

Our population and school district enrollment numbers are alarming and despite the revitalization on Main Street, these numbers and the admonition of the former Finance Director, Bob Duey, are both serious indicators of decline. These declines need to stop and can be reversed with strategic and effective leadership working in partnership with our schools. We need to determine the factors that contribute to this issue and solve them with school board, administration and a group of community stakeholders.

Currently, COVID-19 is not only wreaking havoc on community health, it is also devastating our economy. The above facts combined with COVID-19 are leading Springfield into recession with the rest of the state, country and world. None of us has experienced a pandemic-induced recession so we don't know quite what to expect. In addition, the likelihood of the pandemic resurfacing or a new pandemic occurring is possible for our future. The good news for Springfield is that we are a resilient community and have experienced a taste of revitalization. We have talented and committed business leaders, Chamber staff and city staff. We know how to do it, AND we can experience it again. The recent recovery we experienced on Main Street was *decades* in the making. We cannot afford to take *decades* to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and to rebuild our economy. We have seen that creative, courageous, and visionary entrepreneurs make a difference in building a community. We will build on that experience along with attracting new businesses and supporting current businesses to hasten, strengthen, and expand the recovery of Springfield.

I will:

- ✓ Use city resources strategically. Spending over \$700K on the design of an engineered wood parking structure for Glenwood by the current administration between 2015 and 2018 has returned NO tax revenue to the Glenwood Urban Renewal District. In contrast, I will work with staff and partners to prioritize spending strategically. Money will be earmarked for revitalization, not parking structure designs that sit on a shelf.
- ✓ Work closely with business leaders to ensure that business returns to downtown, thrives, and expands to all areas of Springfield including Glenwood, Booth Kelly, the Paramount District, the Mohawk District, Hayden Bridge, Gateway, Q Street, and Thurston.
- ✓ Immediately create a Mayor's Business Advisory Taskforce to engage a range of business leaders, city staff and Chamber in recovering from COVID-19, and building an even stronger engine for business in Springfield, including support for current business, business attraction, expansion and retention. We will create key performance indicators to help us monitor the progress of our goals.

- ✓ Work with the Chamber and business leaders to create a fertile business environment that will attract and sustain businesses within the identified sector strategy groups, as well as businesses beyond those groups.
- ✓ Invite and incentivize solid proposals and ideas for business development, expansion and attraction.

(Note: The third challenge I see is addressed in the housing section with potential solutions).

3. What role does/could the Chamber of Commerce play in implementing that vision?

Economic Development works best when cities and Chamber's work in partnership. There are aspects of economic development that are best performed by the City and aspects that are best performed by the Chamber. As mayor, I will invite the Chamber to play a larger role with the city in economic development, and I will expect City staff to seek ways to work collaboratively with the Chamber on economic development. I will work to develop new avenues of collaboration between the City and the Chamber. I will propose an additional \$100,000 for a contract with the chamber to energize a more robust economic development partnership between the City and the Chamber-- a true partnership in which city economic development staff and Chamber economic development staff work more closely. We would identify economic development goals, targets and a plan to implement those goals with a timeline.

4. How do you plan to engage the business community in the city's priority-setting and decision-making process?

As stated above, the success of commerce and our businesses drive the vitality of our community. As mayor, I will continue to actively seek out relationships with community leaders and residents, including our business community. I anticipate the city continuing to have representation on the chamber board and working with the chamber to establish routine lines of communication and collaboration between the city and the chamber. As mayor I look forward to regularly attending and participating in Chamber events, meeting regularly with Chamber board and staff leadership, and collaborating between the City and the Chamber.

I anticipate hosting regular business roundtable discussions. Some of these will focus on sectors of business activity, others will focus on geographic areas of business within the community.

Public Policy for Investment, Spending, Taxes, and Fees

5. What is your affordable housing strategy or policy proposal?

- A. As soon as I am elected, I will convene a task force of stakeholders develop a comprehensive strategy to address the lack of all types of housing issue in general, and the lack of affordable housing, specifically. They will report out within 100 days after I take office.
- B. I will identify the most vulnerable children in our community, those living in cars, couch surfing and unsheltered to immediately bring relief to them.
- C. I will find a way to immediately put the \$3million to work on the pilot manufactured pilot project funded months ago by the legislature.
- D. I will identify the barriers that are preventing the construction of housing in Springfield and begin removing those barriers.
- E. I will incentivize the construction of needed housing in Springfield.
- F. I will immediately begin working on a plan so that residents of mobile home parks slated to be closed, can begin to transition out, rather than suddenly finding themselves with no affordable place to live.
- G. I will ensure that the long-awaited Marcola Meadows development project will finally be implemented.

The problem in Springfield is not just in the category of affordable housing. The January 2019 City publication, "Springfield's Housing Strategy" states, "There is a lack of available housing at *all levels* including: emergency shelter, transitional housing, income-qualified housing, market rate rentals, space in manufactured home parks and homes for sale." Springfield has a serious housing shortage.

I have heard reference to our municipal jail and our ordinance that prevents handing money to people on the street from a car, as a solution to homelessness in Springfield. There has been a positive impact on reducing property crime, and preventing the transfer of money from a car on the street to someone on the sidewalk. This ordinance has resulted in improved safety in Springfield. Certainly, our law enforcement plays an important role in ensuring laws are enforced and that property crime is addressed. However, homelessness at its root is not a just a law enforcement problem. While law enforcement is important in keeping us all safe, our officers don't have the tools on their own to solve our city's homelessness issue by themselves, even though they work to try to ameliorate the impacts of homelessness on a daily basis. I will treat homelessness with the seriousness it deserves.

Springfield was awarded \$3Million dollars months ago by the state for a pilot project to build a manufactured home village to help create more affordable housing. When I

checked recently, the city still had not identified a site for this project. Affordable housing is an urgent problem in Springfield, and funding for the project has been available for months. This needs to be addressed with a greater sense of urgency. The zone change at the Patrician Court will likely result in the closure of that park. That means that a large number of people living in low income housing will be displaced. This problem was foreseeable. Ten years ago when the Patrician Court was purchased, the owner announced his plan to close the court for redevelopment. The City should have begun working on a plan ten years ago to transition people living in the Patrician so that a large number of people living in low income housing now won't be suddenly homeless. The closure of this Park and other mobile home parks in Springfield is taking low income housing off the market. The city should have been working on a plan years ago.

I am interested to learn why the city of Springfield withdrew from the Intergovernmental Housing Policy Board. Springfield also did not participate in the Lane County Shelter Feasibility Study which could have helped in gathering critical data for our problem with our current unhoused population. Springfield may be missing out on engaging in regional solutions to affordable housing. I've met with Sarai Johnson, the Joint Housing and Shelter Strategist and Sandy Belson, from the Springfield City staff. Both are working hard to make a difference. Homelessness needs to become "rare, brief, and non-recurring," in the words of Sarai. Springfield has treated homelessness as a "Eugene" problem. The reality is, homelessness is pervasive and doesn't stop at the I-5 divider between our cities. You may have noticed that homelessness in Springfield has become more prominent within the past months. I will work regionally and locally to address homelessness in Springfield and bring more effective solutions.

6. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of any proposed public infrastructure investment? Feel free to offer an example.

Transparency is important. Taxpayers want to know that their tax dollars are being spent effectively to bring about needed improvements. The very first thing I would do is to assure that infrastructure projects are part of a larger plan and of strategic value to the residents of Springfield. Then I would work with the Council and members of the public to identify criteria for success BEFORE proposing public infrastructure improvement and as we have done at Lane Community College, with our proposed bond measure. I would support having an oversight group regularly review progress and report their findings publicly. Accountability is vital and must be a part of any public project.

7. How would you balance new construction with rehabbing, expanding, and better utilizing our existing residential and commercial spaces?

The revitalization on Main Street also is an example of entrepreneurs recognizing underutilized assets and fully developing those assets. The developers of the Frey and Rankin building and the buildings on the north side of the 300 block created apartments from spaces that were vacant for years. This kind of rehabbing is great for the economic vitality of a community. It takes full advantage of existing infrastructure and maximizes the potential of the community and it contributes to an innovation district type environment. What has occurred on the 300 block of Main Street would not have been possible without courageous, creative, and visionary entrepreneurs. I know these developers and have provided support and assistance to them. I will continue to promote this kind of entrepreneurialism to revitalize our entire community.

The larger question of new construction vs. rehab is addressed through input from stakeholders, guided by a plan for specific geographic sites that fit into a larger overarching plan for the city. Stakeholders include: those with expertise in urban planning; developers; residents at large; the planning commission; policy makers who have access to Community Development Block Grant funding, Transient Room Tax money, and Urban Renewal funds, as well as other funding sources within the city; and property owners.

8. Do you believe major tax and fee increases should be referred to the voters? (some recent examples: safety, payroll, carbon or other emissions/climate tax, corporate activities tax, etc.) Please explain why or why not.

I would consider referring a revenue raising measure to the ballot if I believed there was not adequate community consensus for the council to act on its own, or if the lack of service would create undue hardship to the people I serve. Citizens elect their representatives to be responsible stewards of our resources. As public officials we must invest in the work to be sure there is robust community engagement any time we ask citizens to pay more for a new investment. This can take the form of holding extensive stakeholder meetings, providing time for public comment, or even referring a measure to the ballot. The most important thing we can do as we seek to serve our community is to actively ensure that citizens have the opportunity for input and that we are keeping an open door to our constituents. As mayor one of my top priorities will be transparency and communication.

The above statements infer a principle that elected officials need to be responsible stewards on behalf of tax payers. That same principle would apply to the City or SEDA donating tax payer financed assets such as the 6 million dollar property in Glenwood identified as the site for the indoor track. Prior to any possible donation, at minimum robust vetting of the decision should occur. This could take the form of an objective

panel of citizens or public forums and open house discussions. It may also take the form of a public vote.

9. What strategies or policies would you support to control government spending that effectively lessens the need to increase taxes, fees, or other charges.

Controlling government spending involves effective strategic planning and forecasting, prioritizing, accountability, and a mindset that conveys to the entire organization that keeping taxes and fees in check is important to the success of our city. This starts at the top of the elected leadership – the mayor. My first effort would be to communicate this to staff and invite staff to participate in the effort to reduce expenses and control spending. I would charge a group to look at best practices and report back to me within 180 days after taking office. I would also ensure that tax dollars are spent on strategic initiatives that will benefit the city. The \$740,000 dollars spent by the current administration to design an engineered wood parking structure in Glenwood is an example of how NOT to spend tax dollars strategically. Simultaneously, I would be seeking input from staff, the Chamber and a wide range of stakeholders and invite participation in ways to generate revenue beyond parking fines.

10. What would you do with an unexpected \$1m budget windfall, and why?

First, a mayor, elected officials and staff should always have a strategic plan that incorporates any unexpected windfall. Secondly, I would seize opportunities to leverage the money so that the value is greater than \$1M. I would take the existing priorities of the city into consideration. I would set some amount aside to offer incentives to creative people for proposals for projects that are consistent with priorities of the city and that would promote economic development and private sector ownership of the project. Ideas that appeal to me are projects that would promote revitalization beyond Main Street (Thurston, Paramount District, Mohawk District, Booth Kelly, Hayden Bridge, Q Street, Glenwood, Thurston). Projects could include some amount for start-up funding, improving the exterior of businesses, a shuttle from Booth Kelly that would expand parking for downtown and connect Booth Kelly with the downtown. I would want to spend “windfall” money on something that could be accomplished within a relatively short time frame and make a noticeable impact. In summary, I would have worked with City Council, the Chamber, and residents long before such a windfall occurred so that we would have a list in place that could serve as a starting point for consideration.