

City Questions

- 1) It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how do you prioritize realistic choices?

Ward 1

Ginny Skutnik: As overall costs for goods and services increase, it is more important than ever to continue to be good stewards of taxpayer funds. Making sure continued communication with Department Heads to know the needs that are anticipated for equipment/supplies/staffing is one of the initial steps taken. In addition to input from Staff, being aware of needs of the community, as far as services and maintenance is the other crucial element. Prioritizing those items starts with first and foremost, public health and safety being highest; with further prioritization following the priorities that the City Council have indicated having been brought forward from the not only staff, but the constituent voice. All of that being used as guideposts. It also needs to be remembered that any use of public funds is also sometimes regulated by state statute and we need to remain compliant with the of use of public funds.

Steve Huntley: 1. Public Safety needs 2. City infrastructure 3. Other government operations.

Ward 2

Trent Meyer: I would like to create jobs, cut wasteful spending and get the community involved.

Brad Consbruck: I believe you have to look at the absolute needs of the city. I think this is the first step. I believe the next step is to include, the local businesses, and citizens in order to narrow down the realistic choices.

Ward 3

Chuck Rosenberg: You have watch spending and just buy what is necessary.

Marc Rowan: Tough choices have to be made deciding between wants and needs. We can have no special interests of just a few.

Ward 4

Matt Fong: You're correct – it's easy to talk about lowering taxes but it's a challenge to find realistic solutions. The City Council is currently in discussions regarding lowering our property tax levy. The levy has been static for several years, but with the increase in property values throughout the community, we have a unique opportunity to lower the levy and decrease the tax burden on residents and business owners. At the same time we can lower the levy and NOT decrease services and investments in the community.

Roger Harper: Constituent input is necessary since my personal tax situation may not reflect the overall need

2) What is your vision for how Hastings can invest in the talent capital of our community?

Ward 1

Ginny Skutnik: My vision for how Hastings can invest in the talent capital of our community lies with supporting agencies that are cultivating programs that are being used to promote and retain talent in our community. Some of those agencies include the Chamber of Commerce, HEDC as well as the local educational institutions and health care facilities. I see the City taking a continued active role in the retention of talent by working with businesses interested in locating in our community to grow the needed jobs to sustain top talent.

Steve Huntley: If you really want to have opportunities you have to have policies that provide for affordable housing, and recruit and development of skilled labor. Tax reform especially property tax.

Ward 2

Trent Meyer: Bring in more high paying tech and manufacturing jobs, assist in finding the employees affordable housing. Work with our schools to keep our workforce here in Hastings.

Brad Consbruck: My vision is to seek out those that want to share their talents with Hastings. Offer assistance by showing them areas in Hastings that would fit their needs, such as locations, buildings, store fronts, entertainment venues and workshops. Promote them with city sponsored advertisement. Maybe look in to tax breaks that would help them get started.

Ward 3

Chuck Rosenberg: I believe an entrepreneur center would best serve the city as new ideas for business could be explored.

Marc Rowan: We need to convey the message of all the great opportunities our community offers. We must get that message out.

Ward 4

Matt Fong: I feel that talent is one of our greatest opportunities for the future success of our community! I'm happy to see that both Hastings Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce have hired positions focused on talent and marketing for our community's future. As one of the founding members of Hastings Young Professionals (formerly known as Network Hastings), I've worked to provide programs and events that connect young professionals in our community. Giving new and young professionals the ability to connect with other business professionals and an exposure to all of the things that make Hastings a great place. Now as I've approached the age of no longer being a "young" professional I believe that it's important to allow these groups the opportunity to connect and communicate with one another in ways that are authentic to them.

Roger Harper: I think there could be a collaborative group established between the high schools, HC and CCC that could help steer our young people towards productive summer internships and job training opportunities.

3) Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council? Between the position of City Council and the position of City Administrator?

Ward 1

Ginny Skutnik: My thoughts in regards to the relationship of the Mayor and City Council: In Hastings we have a “Weak Mayor form of Government” and this has no bearing on the effectiveness of a Mayor, it points to the level of political power assigned to the Mayor. In this form of government, I see the City Council as holding the legislative and executive authority to govern the City. The Mayor recommends appointments and is a consensus builder. Many times the Mayor is the first to know about new programs/issues of the community and will present them to the Council for consideration; but any actual action is decided by the City Council as the representative of their constituents. My thoughts in regards to the relationship between the City Administrator and the City Council: the City Administrator manages the day to day operation of the City; providing the City Council with any impartial pertinent information that they will need on issues to be considered. One other very important role of the City Administrator is to insulate staff from any political impact so that, as professionals, they can continue to do their job satisfactorily.

Steve Huntley: Both the Mayor and City Administrator take their directions from the City Council. The Council takes their directions from the Citizens

Ward 2

Trent Meyer: At this time I do not have any thoughts regarding the position of the mayor and the city council.

Brad Consbruck: I believe the Mayor should be working with the City Council as a facilitator. I think the Council members main job is to listen to the citizens , and to make their voices known to the Mayor. The council and the Mayor should then work together to do what's best for Hastings, and its citizens. The City Administrator, should prepare the business end of the city to the council and Mayor, and again make those decisions with input from the citizens.

Ward 3

Chuck Rosenberg: The Mayor and the Council have a good relationship. The Council is to go through the Administrator for all issues.

Marc Rowan: It is important that the relationship between the two stay workable. Same to be said of part 2 of this question. All involved must be accountable. Working together is the goal that must be attained.

Ward 4

Matt Fong: There’s no doubt the City Council, Mayor and City Administrator can improve our communication in the community. I believe that the Mayor and the City Council should all be working together to identify the best ways for us to support and work with community members to invest in our future. The City Administrator should be working with city staff to implement the strategies set by the City Council. Additionally, the City Administrator should be identifying issues that may be a challenge in the community and providing recommendations to the City Council on how to address them.

Roger Harper: I wouldn't be a candidate for the City Council if I thought there wasn't a need for the Council to improve. If elected, my thoughts and actions will be clearly enunciated! The Mayor, council and City Administration has been chosen by the voters and is viable if it does represent the voters. The election should determine their thinking.

4) **What is your vision for the growth and development of Hastings business and industry?**

Ward 1

Ginny Skutnik: My vision for the growth and development of business and industry in the community is to continue with well planned and sustainable growth that will benefit our community and surrounding areas. We are responsible for being able to provide the infrastructure that businesses require; while being compliant with state statute. Included in that planning is the elimination of the idea that we will ever be a Kearney or Grand Island-as far as growth goes. We need to establish ourselves as a viable community that does not have the high traffic that comes right off the interstate system, but has desired services and opportunities for a high quality of life.

Steve Huntley: To have growth you have to train city employees to be more customer oriented. Establish policies to recruit and develop skilled labor. Affordable Utilities, Good infrastructure. Policies to encourage development of affordable housing.

Ward 2

Trent Meyer: I would like to see a team effort and working together on cold calls add incentives and work with our schools like Hastings college and CCC to offer more degrees that would fill the demand.

Brad Consbruck: I would like Hastings to be more business friendly. Make it easier to build, and re-model existing buildings. I would like to see family friendly entertainment. Such as comedy clubs, specialty restaurants. I would like to see manufacturing facilities that offer good wages, benefits, and opportunities for their employees to move up and stay with the companies. Make it more inviting for people to move to Hastings, work and raise a family.

Ward 3

Chuck Rosenberg: You first need industry to bring in new business to the community.

Marc Rowan: We must keep current businesses and attract new. No bones about it.

Ward 4

Matt Fong: The City of Hastings - including the City Council - must work with our local partners (local businesses, investors, the Chamber of Commerce, and HEDC) to support the growth and development of business and industry. This can look wildly different for the various types of business development and we must be open to growth that's different from what we've seen in the past. As jobs continue to evolve and change, we must be ready to work with businesses on how they need support. That could mean supporting economic development workforce programs, changing zoning designations, or providing incentive dollars. One of the things that I think is best about our community is our ability to work together to identify solutions.

Roger Harper: The roll of the City government is to promote Hastings as a healthy and desirable place to live and work. The Council should be an advocate for bringing in new business and supporting existing business through ongoing study of the opportunities that are available. Hastings has grown very little since I was a boy and I will support compatible growth as a council member.

5) As an elected leader, how will you help to shape a positive, growth-oriented narrative for the Hastings community?

Ward 1

Ginny Skutnik: I will help shape a positive, growth oriented description for Hastings by continuing to consider new ways of operations based on efficiency and progress of our local government. I believe that in this ever changing environment, good things can happen even if “we’ve never done it this way”. Continuing to listen to constituent’s needs and thoughts and being open to change will lead me to be a conscientious elected official and be of benefit to the community.

Steve Huntley: I will work to find ways to relieve the burden of property taxers, and develop policies to encourage affordable housing while working to attract and develop more skilled workers.

Ward 2

Trent Meyer: I have lived in Hastings all of my life I feel obligated to better Hastings for my family and friends so I will work hard to provide the best leadership while serving my constituents. One of my goals is to grow and repair infrastructure.

Brad Consbruck: I think there is a lot of potential in Hastings. There are areas of town that would fit with what ever theme a person might be seeking, (historical, modern, and futuristic). There is room for growth. Its a city that's not too big and not too small. Its a good place to live, and raise a family.

Ward 3

Chuck Rosenberg: You must be flexible to grow the City. Work to make it happen for a business.

Marc Rowan: I work well with people of all backgrounds and can find common ground to bring unity. I love this community and will be an attentive listener to those wishing to ask questions and provide input.

Ward 4

Matt Fong: I think it’s vitally important for us to remember all of the GOOD things that we have happening in our community! Since my wife and I moved to Hastings in 2001, there’s been essential investments in our downtown, continued support for our public and private school systems, expansions in our housing stock, and needed growth in jobs. It’s easy to lose sight of all the good as we get weighed down with disagreements on how best to invest in our future. I’ve always tried and will continue to highlight the GOOD in our community.

Roger Harper: The City has tremendous assets in education for our young people that benefit from strong support from the council. I will continue to advocate for that effort. Our downtown is looking its best and this needs continued support. Our industrial and agribusiness sector are the key to future employment and must be supported by the City government and I am all in for all of the above.