

North Ada County Foothills Association (NACFA)
City Council Election Candidate Survey
October 2009
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For “check a block” questions, please feel free to add narrative in any/all cases to fully and accurately characterize your philosophy, approach or opinion.

A. Philosophy and Approach

- 1. Describe the role of an Eagle City Council member as you see it. What motivated you to seek a Council seat? Please discuss your views on the interests of Area of Impact (AOI) and foothills residents and the Council’s role in responding to them.*

The role of a city council member is to hear constituents’ viewpoints, consider all available information, discuss issues in a collaborative manner with the rest of the city council, and make the best decision possible using all available information, in accordance with the law.

I am passionate about local government because it is the closest to the citizenry and the results are immediately visible. After having been appointed to fill a vacancy in March 2009, I want to stay on for a full term because I have the experience, knowledge, and vision to help solve some of our current challenges. I have been effective on the City Council team, and I’m not afraid to make tough decisions.

I recognize the great interest that AOI and foothills residents have in what the city is doing, and the City should listen to their opinions and concerns. Ultimately, the City should make all efforts to ensure growth in the AOI is compatible with the City’s vision and comprehensive plan and in the best interest of Eagle residents, because that development could be part of the City at some time in the future. I personally listen to everyone and feel they have the right to express opinions to me, whether or not they live in the City of Eagle. While I may not always agree or give the same weight to those opinions as I would those of an Eagle citizen, I do appreciate the different viewpoints, which are very helpful to me in considering how I vote.

- 2. What do you think the City is currently doing well that you would continue to support? What does the City need to change...and why?*

The City has significantly improved transparency and making information available to the public. The decision making process has become more inclusive. The current Council is thoughtful and deliberative. There is a good mix of knowledge, experience and viewpoints which result in a more thorough and reasoned decision making process.

As for things the City needs to change, I believe it’s time for us to look at what services we need to provide and figure out how to sustainably fund them. Too many citizens don’t seem to have correct information about our budget process and

available funding sources, including property tax collections. We could do a better job of educating on those issues.

3. *What are major issues facing the City in the next four years? Ten years? How would you approach each?*

The below items are critical to address over the next four years – and some of them will likely carry forward over the next ten years.

- a. Budget stabilization:
 - explore zero based budgeting to see if we are at appropriate funding levels for city functions
 - develop a 5-year capital improvement plan, updated annually
 - implement more technology and online services for better customer service and more efficiency at City Hall
 - pursue a final resolution of the City Hall building lease (i.e., I think we need to buy the building if we can)
- b. Economic Development & Downtown Revitalization:
 - finalize the downtown comprehensive plan
 - support and encourage Chamber, ESTech, and other economic development efforts
 - review the comprehensive plan and design review standards to ensure we strike the right balance between economic viability and aesthetics
- c. Transportation Needs:
 - partner with Valley Regional Transit and others to identify and implement a permanent funding source for the bus transit system
 - map and prioritize gaps in sidewalks and pathways to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle transportation
 - complete the Plaza Drive intersection on Highway 44 to connect the north and south sections of Eagle
- d. Planning for the Future:
 - consider combining the planning and zoning committee with the design review committee
 - continue active involvement in COMPASS regional planning efforts
 - undertake annual review of comprehensive plan and map and update as needed
 - work with Ada County to ensure that growth and development is appropriate and directed by the residents of Eagle

4. *The current comprehensive plan was adopted after a great deal of citizen input and is based on the community vision of Eagle's future. The City has generally welcomed developer requests for semi-annual changes to the adopted comprehensive plan—an approach that has been highly controversial and contentious. Describe how you would balance citizen priorities v. those of the*

development community. Articulate those circumstances you regard as valid causes for changes to or departures from the adopted comprehensive plan.

I don't believe there have been any changes to the comp plan since I've been on the Council, and I am generally unfamiliar with how the City has approached developer requests for comp plan changes in the past. The comp plan should not be etched in stone, but it should not be changed too often, either. Everyone's crystal ball is cloudy, and while it's good to plan for the future, we can seldom predict it. Valid reasons for change or departures from the adopted comp plan include:

- a. Underlying assumptions or circumstances have changed
- b. Citizen input and opinions changed
- c. Private property rights need to be considered
- d. The plan is not doing what it was supposed to do

The key word is "balance" – try to consider all angles and viewpoints and look at decisions as a whole, rather than a narrow focus.

B. Financial Management and Budget

Troubled economic times have created budget problems for most cities, including Eagle—where development and growth fees historically contributed heavily to revenue. Recent budget discussions demonstrated differing philosophies from City officials, with some members stressing cost savings and others more focused on finding revenue to continue current City operations and levels of service.

Your opening paragraph somewhat misstates the discussion at the recent budget workshops and hearings. All council members were in favor of cost savings, and after 4 lengthy budget workshops, we achieved a substantial amount of budget cuts. After the previous large budget reduction in February 2009, the current level of service is pretty lean, and in some cases it is too lean (the cutback in library hours, for example). Two council members wanted to cut the budget any way necessary to avoid an increase in the mill levy, even though that increase would not have increased the "pot" of property tax money collected from existing property owners from the prior year. The other two council members (including me) did not propose taking the 3% increase in the "pot" of property taxes allowed by law, but we did think we should collect the same total amount of property taxes that we collected last year (which was barely enough to pay for the library and police department). In fact, the proposed budget brought to us by the mayor at the start of the process was substantially less than the budget for the previous fiscal year after the big cuts were made in February 2009, and the Council worked as a team to cut it back even further.

1. Describe additional revenue sources you would like Eagle to explore and develop in order to create a more stable resource base—one less reliant on growth and less vulnerable to economic downturns.

It would be nice if we could consider a local option sales tax, but that's out of the question without a state law change. I think we need to get to a sustainable level of property tax collections to pay for the services the people have asked the city to provide. If we can keep our businesses healthy and quality jobs in our community, that will also help generate tax revenue to cover the requested services.

2. Would you be XX willing or ___ unwilling to support an increase in the levy rate?

Almost every other district and city and Ada County take the 3% increase in total property taxes allowed by law every year. Eagle did not take the 3% last year and we didn't take it this year. In fact, the City of Eagle is collecting less total property tax revenue (not counting new construction and annexations) this new fiscal year than the year before. I don't think that's a sustainable approach, and I feel the city operations are currently very close to being underfunded. Unfortunately, state law does not permit cities to raise money any other way besides property taxes and user fees. The council will be looking at all user fees in the near future to determine if any should be raised, but that will not generate a significant increase in revenue.

The property tax structure in Idaho is confusing. The City may not increase its total property tax collections by more than 3% a year (not including new construction and annexations). Based on the total assessed values, the city decides how much the levy rate needs to be to collect the same amount of tax as the year before. Some years the rate goes up, and other years (when assessed values are increasing) the levy rate goes down because the city can't exceed a 3% increase in the total amount collected.

In addition, there is only one line item on the property tax bill that goes to the City of Eagle – the rest are either voter approved bond issues or they are separate districts with their own elected boards that set their own budgets and are not accountable to the City in any fashion. Last year, I paid \$111.59 to the City of Eagle, which I think is a pretty good value for the services I receive. This year, I will pay about \$130.00 (because the assessed value of my home actually increased over last year's – most homeowners have seen a decrease in assessed value so will see either the same total amount of tax paid to Eagle as last year, or even a decrease).

3. Please characterize how you would approach reducing City expenses, should that continue to be necessary, by ranking the following elements, from 1 (first source of cuts) to 11 (12, if you list under "Other") (last source of cuts):

___ Library – Already cut quite a bit in FY 2008-09, using some library reserves to fund FY 2009-10 (will need to provide additional funding for FY 2010-11 to sustain current level of service and even more additional funding if we want to bring the hours of operation back to what they were before the last cuts) – Something I think not everyone is aware of is that the City Council does not have the ability to determine how the library money is spent. All we can do on the Council is budget an amount of money every

year for the library. There is a library board that figures out how to spend that money. This mechanism is established by Idaho Code, and the City Council has no control over library expenditures, hours of service, etc.

___ Police – Already cut in FY 2008-09 and 2009-10 – unwilling to cut further

___ Planning – Already cut in FY 2008-09 and 2009-10 – I was unwilling to cut the planning budget any further this year; however, if the City goes through a zero-based budgeting process (or similar), and if it is determined the planning department is overfunded, I would support cuts. It is possible we will find out we are underfunded, however, which would necessitate identifying additional funding for planning efforts.

___ Reductions in City staff (specify department(s)) – Already cut in FY 2008-09 (40% Reduction in Force). The city staff has been cut back quite a bit already and I think it's about as low as it can go.

___ Across-the-board reductions in hours worked by all City staff (v. layoffs) – This will likely be done in our new fiscal year to implement the 5% salary reductions included in this year's budget.

___ Reductions in pay and benefits for City staff – See above

___ Parks maintenance/improvement – Already cut in FY 2008-09 and 2009-10, and we don't have enough in the budget this year to maintain previous levels of service

___ City Hall building – We need to purchase the building; paying debt service on the purchase price as opposed to leasing it would save about \$80,000 per year in rent payments and property taxes over the next 20 years, and then a tremendous savings once the building has been paid for.

___ Mayor's compensation – Already cut for FY 2009-10 and 2010-11 (2.5% each year) – The Council has already discussed revisiting this issue in 2 years when Mayor Bandy's term is up to see if the mayor should be a part-time position (although if we did that, someone would have to be hired to run the office).

___ Council Members' compensation – Already cut in half FY 2009-10 – I would support cutting out health insurance benefits for the city council members.

___ Contributions to regional entities (COMPASS, Blue Print, Valley Ride, etc.) – We are required to belong to COMPASS per state law, Route 44 bus funding was cut in FY 2009-10 but we retained the \$7300 general dues payment for administration of the Valley Ride program, other memberships

and contributions were also cut for FY 2009-10. We are about as low as we can go on this one, too.

___ Other (please describe)

You've really demonstrated the Hobson's Choice facing the City, now that new development applications have stopped subsidizing the rest of the city's operations, which allowed the City to keep its mill levy the second lowest in the state for many years while the population grew exponentially. I don't see us as having much room to cut further.

4. Describe the emphasis you would/would not place on expanding the City's commercial base and, if appropriate, how you would achieve that expansion.

The first thing I'd like to see is the downtown comprehensive plan finished and a plan adopted for revitalizing and retaining downtown businesses. Next, I support the private sector efforts that have been done to date to attract high-tech jobs and create a viticulture center for our region. If we don't have a decent commercial base and viable local businesses, then we become just another large subdivision of Boise, and I would hate to see Eagle lose its identity that way.

5. Describe how the development entitlements for 10,000+ new as yet un-built housing units granted over the last several years will or will not influence your position on future development applications and the City's ability to provide services to new residents. How do you see the absorption of these un-built developments being handled by the City?

I think the market is going to take care of this oversupply just fine. The City has experienced quite a reduction in the number of development applications submitted, although we are still getting some in and we are also reviewing applications in the AOI that are coming through the County. Over the next couple of years, I believe the majority of these properties will either be developed and sold, or the developers will allow their entitlements to lapse because the market doesn't exist for the product.

C. Infrastructure

1. What role, if any, do you see for the City in ensuring the protection of regionally-shared water resources for all area residents, including those currently reliant on private wells in the City, the AOI and the foothills?

This is one more aspect that has to be considered and weighed as part of any big picture discussion of city development. It's important for the City to balance all critical factors, such as water use, when determining any development application. I believe it's important for developers to work collaboratively with the City and existing landowners to attempt a mutually agreeable result.

2. ACHD (<http://www.achd.ada.id.us/Projects/ProjectsPast.aspx>) and ITD (SHs 16, 44 and 55, Three Cities crossing) have transportation planning efforts underway for Eagle and the North Foothills, largely in anticipation of growth in both the City and the North Foothills.

a. Do you ___ support or ___ not support these plans?

First, I support the City's involvement in all regional planning processes – that's one of the reasons I am fearful of cutting the planning staff too much further. The planning processes will go forward whether or not Eagle participates, so my concern is that we keep up our involvement to make sure Eagle's interests are addressed. I also think it's important to participate in planning processes with many stakeholders to elevate the level of discussion and allow all concerns to be addressed. As to the specific December 2008 ACHD plan, it seems well thought out and arrives at reasonable conclusions based on the information available.

b. Do you ___ agree or ___ not agree that development should proceed based only on contemporaneous construction of new roadways, including upgrades to existing roadways outside the development, and/or other means of transportation to provide for the impact of that development?

It is an unfortunate fact that road construction almost never happens ahead of development because it isn't usually seen as truly needed until the development has already occurred. I think it is a laudable goal to achieve contemporaneous construction of roadways, and we should of course try to achieve that goal, but I don't think it's a reasonable expectation that it will occur very often.

c. Are there specific transportation plans in place that you would like to see changed?

Not at this time – but we should continue to review and update completed plans on a regular basis.

D. Foothills vision, open space and rural character, public recreation opportunities

1. Describe your vision of the foothills as a part of the community and/or the priority you would assign to the following by ranking from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important):

___ Rights of property owners

___ Adherence to the adopted foothills comprehensive plan and the community vision

___ Location of density adjacent to existing and planned major highways, with preservation of central open space

Preservation of wildlife habitat and restoration of native plant species

Creation of an interconnected trails network for non-motorized recreation

Avoidance of development in steep and visually sensitive areas

Preservation and enhancement of Eagle's unique rural and equestrian lifestyles

These are all equally important to me. I can't prioritize one of them over another because they all need to be considered as a whole – and not focus on one to the exclusions of the others. I think you have accurately summed up the major considerations that must go into the decision making process for our foothills development.

2. Do you support or oppose (or unsure) the City's plans to lease and ultimately acquire 1900+ acres of BLM land north of Beacon Light Road (proceeding east from SH16 to Willow Creek Road) for development of a regional park for non-motorized recreation?

I very much support the City's acquisition of this property. It is almost unheard of for a city to acquire that large of an area of open space for free and maintain it for recreational purposes. I think the City would be remiss in not aggressively pursuing this opportunity.

3. The City has identified the following possible sources for funding regional park development, operations and maintenance. Indicate by a mark in the space provided those you support (leaving blank those you do not support):

Impact fees generated by new development (limited to park development and construction; not available for operations and maintenance);

General fund (available only on a fiscal year basis);

User fees/passes for "nonresident" users (assessed via passes for those not City residents; operations and maintenance revenue

Foothills levy approved by and applied to City residents (available for development, operations and maintenance; requires voter approval of 50% + 1 votes majority; must be renewed every two years)

Volunteer labor and donations

4. Discussion by the Planning and Zoning Commission at recent hearings considering annexation of this BLM land has raised the possibility of creating a Community Improvement District to supplement impact fee revenues.

Do you ___ favor or ___ oppose (or ___X___ unsure) the creation of a CID?

I certainly wouldn't rule out anything without looking at all the options first and having a discussion on the pros and cons.

5. Describe your vision of the regional park and/or the priority you would assign to the following elements of the City's preliminary plan (City cost estimates provided) for park development by ranking the following from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important), leaving blank any elements you do not support (in which case priority assigned to least important will be the same as the number of elements you support):

___2___ Linder Road trailhead (\$436,600 construction; \$8,000 p.a. operations and maintenance)

___2___ Hartley Lane Trailhead (\$193,100 construction; \$1,200 p.a. o&m)

___2___ Hartley Lane Restrooms (\$80,000 construction)

___1___ 10 miles of 2-3 foot earthen multi-purpose trail (equestrian, hikers, cyclists— \$18,000/ mile construction; \$4,000/ mile p.a. o&m)

___1___ 8 miles of 10-12 foot earthen multi-purpose trail through Little Gulch (\$60,000/mile construction; \$4,000/mile p.a. o&m)

___2___ Riding and rodeo arena—8 to 10 acres (construction funded by user groups with City providing land and infrastructure; p.a. o&m not yet determined)

___ 500-seat seasonal amphitheater located off Linder Road (\$1.26 million construction for facility, parking and infrastructure; p.a. o&m not yet determined)

I don't know enough about the planned sequencing of the above components to give a reasoned answer on prioritizing construction of the improvements. For me, the jury is still out on whether we need an amphitheater and related improvements so far away from the downtown core.

Thank you for your participation.