

# WHERE THEY STAND

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## SECTION B

### Franklin City Council: Wards 2, 4

Republican primary candidates

**Primary election day:** May 8 ■ **Voting hours:** 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. ■ **Web Extra:** Expanded answers and more questions at [www.thejournalnet.com](http://www.thejournalnet.com)

**Ward 2**  
Pick one



JONATHON COLE



ANN GORDON

On May 8, voters in Franklin Wards 2 and 4 pick candidates to run as Republicans in the November general election. Reporter Candace Beaty interviewed the candidates on a wide range of issues. Voters have a right to know where the candidates stand on the issues. Use these pages as a guide to help you make your voting decision.



**Ward 4**  
Pick one



KEN AUSTIN



PHIL BARROW

**Cole**

No. 1 is property taxes. A lot of houses are for sale because of that. Need to control spending and be smart about spending money. Second is job growth. Franklin is finally starting to see more jobs. Need to do more, though. Third issue is downtown development. Need to develop the east side of the Interstate 65 exit. That's the first thing many people see. It's not so pretty. If that's developed, people will want to come and see what the rest of Franklin is like. That area is the key for Franklin to take off.

**Gordon**

First, keeping taxes in line and not increasing them any more than needed. Would do this by monitoring city services. Second, bringing more businesses into town, which helps with taxes and jobs. Need to be aggressive with enticing firms to come to Franklin. Third issue is beautification of downtown. Hopefully the city will get the grants and get people to come.



**What are the top three issues facing the city? How would you address them?**

**Austin**

No. 1 is property taxes and taking a hard look at spending and making sure we are passing a balanced budget. Second, fire protection of the north side of Franklin needs to improve, and the council is in the process of addressing that. No. 3 is continued promotion of economic development. Serves on the Franklin economic commission. Commission has done a good job giving favorable recommendations to council.

**Barrow**

First, finances. With the situation with the state, not sure how to address this. Need to re-elect a conservative council. Second, city needs to grow. Need more jobs, and to do that need to attract industry. Have to have a decent tax rate. Good schools, amenities and nice parks department are what employers look for. Went through a situation a while ago where a mayor said Franklin was not interested in industry. Franklin is getting it turned around. Third, continue to provide services our community wants and deserves. Trash pickup and those things are great.

**Cole**

Agrees with the Open Door policy. The public elects us for a reason and has every right to know what's going on. With what has been going on lately with officials meeting in private, thinks that's wrong. Would give no special privilege to any individual. Shouldn't discuss policy behind closed doors. Council members are there to serve the people, not themselves.

**Gordon**

Yes. Doesn't think council can meet in private. Have to publicize meetings and everything. If asked, would say they can't do that.



**Will you follow the letter and spirit of the Open Door Law? What if an attorney or other elected official makes a recommendation that goes against what you know is the law? What if someone requests to meet with the council in private?**

**Austin**

Has never had a request to meet in private. The law is straightforward. Had never been asked to be a part of any closed-door meeting. If the city attorney had asked to meet in private, it would not happen. Would have a problem with that.

**Barrow**

Absolutely will participate in Open Door Law. Can't imagine anyone coercing him into anything. Has never happened where someone has requested to meet in private. Council has an excellent record.

**Cole**

Tax abatement is just a way of giving a break over a certain number of years. They are appropriate when a large number of jobs are coming in. Not appropriate when employer is paying \$7 to \$8 an hour. Should be used for business bringing higher-paying jobs, such as \$15 an hour or above. City should be smart about it. Don't hand them out to everybody. Is not aware of any retailers getting tax abatements, but that would not be appropriate. Not aware if Franklin is doing that; if the city is, then shame on us.

**Gordon**

Tax abatement gives a business a longer period of time. It gives a business a delay in paying taxes. Business could use money to add on to building or bring in a different division of company. City uses them partly to entice businesses, typically when they want them and it will add employees. Generally a good idea. Has not seen one yet that was not appropriate. Would have to do research to determine when its not appropriate.



**What is tax abatement? When are tax abatements appropriate? When are they not appropriate?**

**Austin**

Decided on a case-by-case basis. City has been lenient to try to help existing companies and promoting new business. Decision has to do with the dollar amounts, how many employees it would bring and certain criteria must be met. City weighs the requirements already. Normally should be above county wage. Must find out if benefits are a part of the package. Economic development group has done a good job to promote existing businesses and help new businesses. Franklin is competing with other cities and counties. Extremely competitive to attract jobs. City doing all possible to draw people here.

**Barrow**

Appropriate when beneficial to the city and when it can promote growth and jobs. An empty plot of ground is worth minimal taxation. People say we lose money when we offer tax abatements. The whole country gives abatements, and Franklin needs to, too. After five or 10 years, it's back to full taxation. So anything you get is going to be worth more than that bare ground. Plus, it will produce jobs and make contributions to the community. It's a win-win situation. To turn down a business and let it go to another community and continue to tax that as farmland makes no sense.

**Cole**

OK as long as city is watching the books and financing. TIF districts are good and bad. TIFs are great for the rest of the city. It's taking money from that area and putting it back into the area. TIF district downtown may be a good idea. Taking the extra money the city is collecting there could increase development in that area.

**Gordon**

Doesn't really know what that is. No comment.



**What is a tax-increment financing district? Do you favor creating or expanding one? Why or why not?**

**Austin**

TIF districts in certain areas are really good. They keep that money right there to build and develop the area. Supports using them if done properly. Can be extremely beneficial.

**Barrow**

Favors TIF district in certain circumstances if it is necessary to bring in something that's going to cost a lot of money and can put the money back into infrastructure for the project. Needs to be handled carefully. Can have an adverse effect on the schools and other taxing units that get cut out. If abated, all taxes are abated. New industry is going to produce growth for the school and that needs financing.

**Cole**

Would say no to hiring 18 full-time firefighters. Businesses have part-time and full-time employees for a reason. Franklin has reserve police officers, and the fire department can do the same. Must be smart with spending. If the city hires 18 full-time firefighters, and you're paying benefits, the taxpayers are not going to be able to support that. May need to add a few part-time guys. Northside station is a good idea if we can afford it. Cannot be wasteful. Do have station on east side. Maybe north side is not the smartest choice. Franklin is expanding on all sides. Need to look at which area is the best bet. Need to look into the project more than what it has been.

**Gordon**

Still evaluating all of that. Need to do something with fire department and probably build a third station. Need to look at five, 10 or 20 years to see where growth will go to make sure the north side is where the station needs to go. Definitely need to do something. Have to handle the short-term effects and research what needs to be done in the long run. City needs to study population growth issues. Now it appears the need for the station is on the north side. Need to look to the west and south, too. A population study would be a good place to start to figure out the needs.



**Can taxpayers afford the type of growth the fire department says it needs? Do you support hiring 18 more firefighters and building a northside station? What other studies should be conducted or options considered?**

**Austin**

Favors a north side station. Tough to do with money situation. Struggling with legislation figuring out tax system and out-of-box thinking as far as taxes concerned. Hands are tied. City can afford a station. Fund set up years ago for drainage and fire. Would like to see a 10-year study to knock down a pole barn at Forsythe Street and Hamilton Avenue. Need a long-term plan on staffing and building an eastside station. Department is currently hiring part-time paramedics, which is to save money. They were going through overtime money quickly. To save money, need to hire part-time paramedics and get those guys on and moving.

**Barrow**

Public safety is a special and volatile issue. Don't know if city needs a new fire station or needs to relocate one. Doesn't have a problem building a building. City has the funds to do it. "My problem is staffing it." Thinks the city will come up with something that will offer the protection the community needs. "Maybe we need to redesign the structure of the fire department, I don't know." Would be nice to study city's growth patterns. Maybe won't always be north, maybe it's going to go east. Maybe even have an outside study done. Would like to see growth go east. Prime land is out east for commercial and real estate.

**Cole**

Agrees with both sides of the argument. Businesses and people have rights. Should look into it to see what the best bet is for each side. With all the exemptions, people are going to bend the rules a little. Should look into it to see if city should keep the exemptions, have a full-fledged smoking ban or do away with it and not have one at all. Council should look at it again. Perhaps should not have rushed it as much. Need to look into it more and hear both sides of the argument for about a year.

**Gordon**

Was happy with the way it went the first time. Proposed that all places that allow anyone under 21 be nonsmoking, and bars and clubs allow smoking. Favors the original ordinance. Will have to see what happens with the lawsuit to know if anything needs to be done.



**Should the city's smoking ban be changed?**

**Austin**

Touchy subject. It's a no-win situation as far as pleasing everyone. The way the ban is currently written is to protect children in restaurants. People when they go into a bar at age 21 should have the right to smoke. Is not for big government. Business owners should have right to choose whether to allow smoking where adults are present and choose when only people age 21 or older are allowed in.

**Barrow**

Not if it is legal. Perceives it to be legal and is a good ordinance. Court will decide, though.

**Cole**

Doesn't think there is a way to cut property taxes. Need to be smart and try to find funds elsewhere and quit going to the property owner. Everybody is getting out of here because the property taxes went through the roof. Nobody can afford it. Taxes are too high so people are not moving here. Need to find alternatives and work with the state. Possibly look into options as far as food and beverage tax. That way everyone is treated equally in the paying taxes and not just hitting the homeowners.

**Gordon**

Can cut taxes by cutting services, but doesn't want to do that. Council should be conscious of where every penny is going. Make sure no money is being wasted anywhere. Council has done a pretty good job. Only so much council can do with the school taxes so high. Need to bring in more people and businesses to increased tax base, which eventually may lower everyone's taxes.



**Franklin has sued the state to raise property taxes, and residents have faced repeated property tax hikes. How do you cut property taxes? What can be cut?**

**Austin**

City in a tough situation. Is against deficit spending and won't pass a budget that is spending more money than the city is bringing in. Administration has looked at ways to save money. Is against putting the burden on the homeowners with taxes. If state eliminates or reduces property taxes, money must come from somewhere. Would consider an inn tax or wheel tax. People who rent and lease should share the tax burden. Not promising that taxes will be lowered. Now is the worst time to be involved in city politics, because of legislation dealing with taxes and the school being built. Will not promise to cut taxes. Will do everything he can to balance budget.

**Barrow**

Hopefully our property taxes will come in this year about the same or less. If people look at statements, will probably find the city did not have the biggest impact. Mainly it's the schools. City taxes could be the same. City has done a good job in the past looking for things to cut to keep taxes down. Eliminated some take-home cars.