

WHERE THEY STAND

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Greenwood City Council: Districts 4,5

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

District 4
Pick one



RONALD BATES, INCUMBENT



TRACY ALAN RUMBLE

On May 8, voters in Greenwood Districts 4 and 5 will pick candidates to run as Republicans in the November general election. Reporter Annie Goeller and assistant managing editor Michele Holtkamp-Frye 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.



District 5
Pick one



MONICA MAGNA-REES



PHILIP E. WATSON

Bates

No. 1 is growth. City has really grown in the past several years. Recent special census shows 47,000 people, a big increase in growth. With growth comes a need for more police and fire protection, more development and infrastructure. No. 2 issue is getting city offices into a building. Greenwood has city hall and leases space on Emerson Avenue for \$80,000 per year. All offices could be under the same roof, and the city could make mortgage payments to buy the building. Third issue is the city has ability to get second-class status. It needs to be addressed in near future but is more appropriate to address after 2010 census.

Rumble

One issue is making Greenwood a second-class city. Would address that by voting for second-class city status. With second-class city status, can implement up to 1 percent food and beverage tax and could probably get another \$500,000 in urban development projects. Second issue is a new water park. Support parks department in trying to implement that. Third is new city building. Doesn't agree with displacing people, but definitely need a new city building. Been renting engineering building at least eight years. Renting is a waste of taxpayer money. City could build a building that is big enough to grow into and can lease space out to help pay the mortgage.



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

Magna-Rees

First would be controversy facing the proposed aquatic center. Another issue is where to put it. The Greenwood city pool is kind of run down. City owns ground behind there. Could use that building and land city owns and build an indoor/outdoor facility that can be used year round. Second is controversy around having all the city offices in one building. That would be nice. Sometimes people have to go to two places to do something. Have bulldozed a house near the city building, and the city owns the land. Third is crime coming to city, such as bank robberies and the recent shooting. Wants to make sure fire department and police department have all resources available to them.

Watson

Growth and how to manage it is the top issue. When city allows C.P. Morgan to build 390 houses on less than 50 acres, that creates a problem and strains school systems. Infrastructure never precedes development in Greenwood. Second issue is taxation. Need to talk about reducing property tax. Is a bill in legislature where state pays 25 percent of operating costs of schools, but when taxation is moved to the state, it is taken further away from people. Third issue is how to make government more inclusive. The average resident feels out of the process. Need to make government seem more user-friendly and open. There are a lot of meetings behind closed doors.

Bates

Absolutely would follow. Would advise the person it is a breach of law and he would not be able to participate in the activity. Absolutely cannot meet in private.

Rumble

Yes, would make every attempt at it. Would have to ask another attorney what the law is. Hopefully an attorney isn't going to go against the law. Would ask city attorney to interpret law. Doesn't know whole open door policy. Doesn't think council would have personnel issues to handle in private. Something mayor would deal with. Doesn't think council would have to meet in closed doors.



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 the law is? What if someone requests to meet with the council in private?

Magna-Rees

Yes, would follow the law. If someone proposed a private meeting, would say it's against the policy and try to have the person come to a meeting and discuss the issue in front of everyone.

Watson

Absolutely. Law would supersede recommendation. Can't think of reason why someone would want to meet with council in private. Closed meetings are not good. They don't serve any purpose. "If it can't be discussed with your neighbor, why should it be discussed?"

Bates

City could use more manufacturing type jobs. City council can be involved in creating economic zones, tax-increment financing districts and tax abatements, which the city has done in recent years. It needs to attract more business and more diversification. Emerson Avenue is also developing and filling with development and customer-related businesses, such as banks, Wal-Mart and Gander Mountain. The city is also widening Graham Road, which could be seen as way to continue to expand such as for businesses that want to locate close to Interstate 65. City is also looking at another I-65 interchange on Worthsville Road.

Rumble

Would almost take any kind of business that would want to come to Greenwood that would benefit the city. Employees can live by where they work. City council plays role in trying to make city an attractive place. Also need to bring in small businesses, not just big businesses. Is a strip mall center on Loews Boulevard that's been open for five years that needs a full-time tenant.



Greenwood's employers are dominated by two sectors: commercial/retail businesses along U.S. 31 and State Road 135 and distribution centers. Are there other types of industries the city should pursue? What role does the city council play in attracting industry and better jobs?

Magna-Rees

Thinks the city needs a good mix of commercial, retail and private sector. City council can help attract businesses by implementing tax abatements where applicable.

Watson

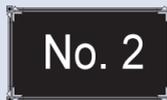
There are many industries. The industry of choice is manufacturing. It's nice to have pleasant-looking building with no emissions. We are moving from manufacturing economy to service economy. Life sciences are hot button. Question is: What does Greenwood have to offer? One function of council is zoning, and another function is tax abatements. Greenwood has a lot of industrial-zoned land. Most businesses are going to want a tax abatement.

Bates

It isn't necessary at this time. Wishes the city could put the issue to a public vote, but state statutes do not allow that. The issue needs to be addressed after the 2010 census. That would be an appropriate time to look at that and make a determination. The deciding factor is once the population reaches 50,000. With second-class city status, the city needs additional representation. It would give Greenwood another city council district and another at-large seat and would divide clerk-treasurer position into two people. Creates additional expenses, and the city needs to have the finances to facilitate that development.

Rumble

Yes, there are benefits in the 1 percent tax, getting support for urban development from a food and beverage tax. Would be more representation. Would have to redistrict into six districts, three at-large.



Should Greenwood pursue second-class city status? Why or why not?

Magna-Rees

Should pursue. Status would open up more seats on the city council and possibly obtain more funds to help city grow and develop.

Watson

Status expands city council. Mayor already got special census, and city meets standards. Is not well-versed enough on issue. City seems to be operating all right. If there is something in status that is desired, no one's told me. Will increase cost of government. Will bring nine-person city council and that would be a good thing to get fresh viewpoint. Greenwood needs one.

Bates

Government defers taxes for a five- or 10-year period. First year, company pays no taxes. Second year, business pays small amount and then the amount increases. It encourages businesses to get off the ground, creates jobs and encourages businesses to locate in Greenwood. If wages are at or above the average in Johnson County or \$12.65 per hour, abatement is appropriate. If jobs would pay minimum wage or \$10 per hour, it would be questioned, not favored and not be appropriate.

Rumble

City defers taxes for up to a certain amount of time. Company doesn't pay for whatever abatement is. Sometimes given on new equipment or depending on how many employees they hire. Is appropriate if it is the deciding factor on whether an employer comes to Greenwood. City gets taxes from people who work there. Need to monitor that the company is doing what it is supposed to do, hiring people, buying equipment. Would not be appropriate if business has defaulted on other agreements.



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

Magna-Rees

Over a span of years, taxes a company pays are reduced. Percentage of taxes goes up over time and company pays taxes over a span of years. There are certain criteria the company must meet, including number of employees and rate of compensation. If company meets criteria, then deemed appropriate.

Watson

Defers portion of property tax, normally for 10 years. Benefits should be greater than amount of taxes being deferred. Sometimes wonders if they are or aren't. Building on every bit of property in Greenwood may not be good thing, but that seems to be the intent of city government.

Bates

Taxes collected in a district are used to facilitate infrastructure in that district and don't go to different taxing districts. Thinks there is a time when phasing out needs to take place, but it depends on parameters, when the district was created and the ground rules at the time. When infrastructure is in place, businesses are in a good place and operate on own, it can convert. Needs to know law on how taxes go back to other areas.

Rumble

TIF district is a tax to help special projects in that area. Mall is TIF, Graham Road is TIF. TIF district can only last 10 years so when TIF is over with, that's it.



What is a tax-increment financing district? At what point, if ever, should the city's eastside TIF district be phased out and tax money from the district should be returned to the general fund, schools and the library?

Magna-Rees

There are two TIF districts in city, one around Fry Road industrial park and the other one is east of Greenwood. Her company is in the TIF district. Entity that raises funds is allowed to spend it on improvement of infrastructure in specific districts. Would like to see eastside district be phased out when area is fully developed and would like to see that in the next 10 years.

Watson

Where city collects taxes for a specific purpose. Instead of increased levies going to schools or police and fire, it goes to infrastructure. Thinks it's time to phase out eastside district. City is going to have a four-lane Graham Road. City officials said this was holding up development, but that's like saying if we build a highway, businesses will come. Said if that were true, Interstate 65 would be lined with industry from Indianapolis to Jeffersonville. The tax has fulfilled its purpose. Sewers are going in. At some point, the schools need the money. If allowed to continue, only people he sees benefiting are developers.

Bates

Steps are pretty well laid out already. Department heads submit budget and go before the council. Council looks over budget, asks questions, asks what was spent the previous year. As an individual, sees what is submitted, compares to previous year's budget. If there are any questions, we see what the answers are and if they are legitimate and decide whether to take further steps. Committed to balanced budget each year. Doesn't know that there are any alterations that need to be made. Process is better than it has been in past.

Rumble

Individually, would take whatever steps need to be taken, such as spending three to four hours every night reviewing the budget. Would see where can cut costs. He is a taxpayer, so if he can save money in the budget he is saving himself money. Doesn't think there is any other way possible to do the budget process other than what is done now. Have discussions at open meeting. Could publicly notify people, like in newspaper, that tonight council will cover these budgets. That way, if a person had one department they wanted to watch, they could come that night. Doesn't think he would alter the process.



The annual budget can be considered the single most important tool the city council has. What steps would you take individually to review the budget? What process should the council use to publicly review the budget? How would you alter the city's budget process?

Magna-Rees

As an office manager, is used to looking at numbers and reports. Would take each department step by step and review numbers and reports and then go on from there. Read reports and see where money is needed. Would make sure citizens know when meetings are when budget will be discussed.

Watson

Believes the way the council does it is departments make requests and council reviews and then votes on request. The process could be opened up more. Budget should be printed in newspaper that says this department is asking for these funds for these purposes and should be in some reasonable detail. Can't review every dollar, but can set up categories. People can see where their tax money is being spent. Would like to see greater local government accountability and let state take care of state's business. People can't see the money when it goes to the state and then state sends back. Gets lost in shuffle.