

WHERE THEY STAND

SECTION B

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On May 8, voters in Greenwood's Republican primary will pick two at-large candidates to represent them in the general election. Assistant managing editor Michele Holtkamp-Frye and reporter Annie Goeller interviewed the candidates on a wide range of issues. Use these pages as a guide to help you make your voting decision.



Greenwood City Council, at-large

Election Day: May 8 ■ Voting hours: 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

At-large (pick two)



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



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?



Greenwood's employers are dominated by two sectors: commercial/retail businesses 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?



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



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



BRENT COREY

Corey

No. 1 issue is maintaining property taxes. Must have effective and efficient budget and use all tools to boost revenue and maintain low property taxes. Second is managing and planning for future growth. City needs a strategic plan. Third is infrastructure. With growth comes pressure on infrastructure needs. Greenwood needs an east-west corridor to help growth and eliminate some of the traffic problems. Worthsville Road is probably one of best options. Hopefully, city can work with state and county get interchange at Interstate 65. City needs a blueprint for the east side.

Corey

Absolutely will follow. If someone came to him and said "Let's have a meeting, we don't have to have it on the books," that's not only breaking the law, it's ethically incorrect. Council is here to serve people, not interest groups or ourselves. Are certain situations, like with the Johnson County Development Corp., where they pull representatives out to meet with potential businesses. That's not breaking the law.

Corey

City needs to broaden employment base. Greenwood has hidden jewel, Endress+Hauser. Need to attract more companies like that. City has a wonderful setup on east side of interstate. Sees Emerson Avenue as a corridor for health sciences, especially with expansion of St. Francis Hospital. Council plays role in helping attract businesses. Council members are part of team with redevelopment commission, economic development commission, city council, mayor and Johnson County Development Corp. Everyone needs to work as team to attract high-caliber businesses. Must be competitive in local and global market.

Corey

Thinks eventually city will get there. Greenwood is a rapidly growing city. Are some benefits to being a second-class city. Doesn't think Greenwood is there yet. Some items city gets as second-class city is bond bank committee, clerk-treasurer position changes, appointee who is comptroller and clerk position. Recommends that city talk about this as community. Challenges media to inform residents what they would be getting and losing. While he knows what status is, his guess is most people don't. To make an informed decision, people need to be informed.

Corey

Tax abatement is one of the tools the state gives to attract business. Common misconception is that it is taking money away. Have flat line for parcel of land, whatever goes above certain amount goes back into certain area, and they get a break. Basically trying to attract businesses by giving them a tax break. Part of attracting highest-caliber businesses. City needs to fully utilize all tools the state gives. They are appropriate on big-scale projects like manufacturing and life sciences. They are not appropriate for retail. Have to look at what they will be able to give city after the abatement.



DOUG DANIEL

Daniel

Top issue is escalating property taxes. The budget has ballooned since 2000. Is tired of closed-door politics. Would suggest budget cuts and cuts in wasteful spending. Would recommend that the budget be introduced earlier. Second issue is crime has ballooned. Police chief has said city is being pummeled by spillover crime from Indianapolis. But mayor says productivity is up, and crime is down. Said city needs more officers, police cars and tools to do the job. Said all supervisors do not need gas-guzzler vehicles. Said city needs 10 more officers. Third issue is controlling growth and quality of growth.

Daniel

Yes. All government business is public issue. Would deny requests that go against what the law is.

Daniel

The city council has the power to approve or disapprove what industries come here. Said city is better suited for a buildup in life sciences and technical parks. Light manufacturing is acceptable. "In this day and age, if Honda plant was coming to Greenwood, that is something people would want to look at very closely." If we are going to put in a rubber-smelting plant, that's not the right one.

Daniel

No. Against it because mayor would get to appoint a controller to handle the money. Best to keep an elected official in charge of the finances. That provides a better check and balance for the community. If an issue came up, community would get to elect a new official.

Daniel

A tax abatement allows a new or existing company to expand and provide jobs. It is a forgiving of taxes over a period of time to encourage expansion and growth and help bring companies here. Each individual case needs to be looked at. Does not favor giving abatement to a company that provides minimum wage or low-paying jobs and doesn't provide anything economically.



THOM HORD

Hord

One is get council to work together on issues, such as positive economic development and controlled growth. Open lines of communication between council and people. Not "Our way is only way." Need to see other side and be flexible. Responsible stewardship of budget, taxes and resources. Need to look at each department, see where resources are at, line-by-line review of spending and identify surplus and deficiencies. Is important to listen to residents' concerns. They are Greenwood. Council's responsibility is to make it to their standards.

Hord

Absolutely will not stand for it. There is a law there. Everything has to be done by the book. Doesn't have a closed door in his office. Doing things behind closed door is not ethical, and is against the law. Need to look and know it is not proper thing to do.

Hord

Council can play large role by looking at types of business coming in. Growth is good as long as it's good for entire business. Partner with businesses and seek out others. Affirm family values. Need to plan growth and not be afraid to say no if business doesn't fit in. Not only look at now, but 10, 20 years from now, make them sure are viable to community.

Hord

Some things come along with that. As city pursues change in status, things go up, things change for the city. Need to sit back and take a look at whole ball. What second-class city entails, how it looks for us in the future if we don't.

Hord

When businesses come into city, want to offer something to entice them. Offer them different structure on taxes. Appropriate abatement is when business guarantees some sort of longevity. Don't want to offer abatement and then they leave in five, 10 years. Want to make sure they're going to be here for a long while. Would not be appropriate if business not on solid ground or has reputation for leaving.



CHARLES L. JOHNSON

Johnson

No. 1 is safety of city. Would address that by maintaining a budget that includes good salaries and good equipment for police and fire department. No. 2 is appearance of city. Is all for preserving Old Towne Greenwood and making it a beautiful place to live. And No. 3 is roads. Would like to see roads upgraded to best of any roads around when comparing Greenwood to other cities.

Johnson

Is not familiar with Open Door Law. If he knows his decision is the law, would stick to that.

Johnson

There's not much room for any more development along those areas. Would not know what businesses city could pursue to bring into Greenwood. Anything that is suitable for the community, the council would have to back it and make sure it is the proper business for that location.

Johnson

Thinks Greenwood should pursue it. Thinks second-class city status would bring city more federal taxes and would bring more employment to the city itself because more people would have to be hired to operate the city.

Johnson

Is not familiar with it. His understanding is that when companies come in, the city gives them a tax break for so many years. He is against tax abatements because if someone comes into the city and sets up business, they should pay the taxes up front and not ask for an abatement. When they are appropriate is if a company or establishment is planning on staying. In past, he has read that companies get big tax breaks and leave city within 10 years and city gets nothing. That is not appropriate.



TIM W. McLAUGHLIN

McLaughlin

No. 1 is growth. Need to make sure it is done in an orderly fashion. Are some things where officials could have used their heads better over the past 50 years. Need to make sure city is growing right over next 20 years, such as with infrastructure. No. 2 is communication. City needs better communication from mayor's office to council, department heads and workers. Communication is lacking. Could be better served if made communication lines a lot clearer. Traffic flow through Greenwood could definitely be better, particularly east-west roads that are congested in morning and evening.

McLaughlin

Yes. Is not familiar with all of Open Door Law, but if it is not allowed, it will not happen.

McLaughlin

The council has got to be open to offering some incentives. Would like to see some high-tech jobs, which would bring higher paying jobs to the area. Council has to be cheerleaders as much as anything else. Have to get out and sell the city. Until city goes out and makes people aware, other people aren't aware of this great area.

McLaughlin

Doesn't know enough about it to make an educated decision. Is not familiar with both sides, such as everything it would entail and bring and whether it would be good or bad for the city.

McLaughlin

Is where businesses pay reduced rate on inventory and land. Are appropriate if they help the city as a whole, such as if they help with jobs, add to the tax roles, bring good things to the city and are a clean industry. Is not appropriate if the business is not proven or can't tell the city what the long-range plans are and number of employees. Sometimes have people come to the city and are vague. Information has to be outlined for the city.



TRENTON L. POHLAR

Pohlar

Quality infrastructure. City is working on a new thoroughfare plan that goes with the comprehensive plan. An east-west corridor has to be built, maybe just south of the city. Must look at a way to get people around Greenwood. Worthsville Road is probably a good location for that. Quality of life. City needs adequate park space, including trails and pathways city has a very good start on. Wants to maintain police and fire protection as growth continues. Will promote continued economic development on the east side. Favors responsible growth. Would continue to manage growth and keep a diversified housing market within the city.

Pohlar

Absolutely. Has no problem discussing issues that are upcoming, but it would not be in a forum that would allow for approvals or anything of that nature. Wants to follow the letter of the law. City attorney does a good job of keeping council members informed of what they can and can't do.

Pohlar

Yes, there are other types of jobs city should attract. One opportunity is life sciences or health care, considering the St. Francis expansion. City already has seen a growth of medical buildings. Sees Emerson Avenue becoming a life sciences and medical offices corridor. "That's an excellent opportunity to bring in higher-paying jobs." First, city must have the facility, and developer will handle that. City has to show doctors and primary investors they are interested. Can attract them and give them incentives, such as abatements or other incentives to get them started.

Pohlar

Yes. Needs to do more research on it. Does not want to increase spending for the city, but at the same time the city has grown significantly the past three or four years. Would have to see cost impact. Would add two more city council members. A controller would be appointed. Changes would increase cost to taxpayers. "But at the same time I feel that probably a controller or somebody of that nature would pay for themselves." Said after more research, wouldn't be opposed to presenting it for discussion.

Pohlar

Abatement is an incentive used to attract businesses. People get misconception that city is giving away money. But used to attract good-paying jobs and good economic development. Businesses that receive abatement do have to pay taxes. The first year, they may not, but it is prorated each year after that. Is in favor of using incentives if city is going to get the return from good companies and jobs that will help the city and be friendly to our community.



MIKE TAPP

Tapp

Top issue is the aquatic park/center. "Personally, I think there needs to be something done." Old city pool is worn out and a cash drain that will continue to get worse. Is not sure that the city needs now. Would support a project, but whether it will cause the tax rate to go up is unclear. City building is still an issue. Does not make sense to have city offices split in different locations. The city probably has spent \$130,000 or more for rent for the building on Emerson Avenue and continues to throw money to repair and maintain the current building. Is concerned about Old Towne and supports the revitalization effort.

Tapp

"After having done this for 16 years, I never took that Open Door Law and would never take it lightly. There is a reason for that law to make sense. That one makes sense." Would be against a recommendation to meet that violates the law.

Tapp

The city council should be open to considering all industry. He remembers a company that was a corn/sugar producing plant in the 1980s, but the issue is the odor. But at least it was considered. "If you don't give them all an equal chance, you don't know what you're missing." Is not recommending all businesses get an abatement, but wouldn't be closed-minded.

Tapp

Before saying he is in favor, all differences need to be looked at in great detail. He knows some of those issues. The city would get to hire a professional controller, and that isn't a bad thing. But city is doing OK managing finances now. Change would increase the number of districts. Question to ask himself is what are the pros, but what are the cons? Doesn't recall all of those issues but would want to revisit them specifically. He would bring it up as a topic of discussion. "Obviously, there is a reason why cities go to that next notch or otherwise that step wouldn't exist." Is not a top priority, but would get serious about it.

Tapp

In order to grant tax abatement, every issue has to be decided based upon its own individual merits. Even with identical companies and industries, each one is a separate project. Is often a misunderstood issue in small-town politics. "I think people think that when abatement is granted, that the companies just don't have to pay taxes." But there is a scale and they do end up paying taxes. "It's a better situation to abate it and get them to come in. Otherwise you wouldn't get any new taxes at all if the land just sat there and wasn't used."