

WHERE THEY STAND

SECTION B

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Franklin mayor

Election Day: Nov. 6 ■ **Voting hours:** 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. ■ **Web extra:** Expanded answers and more questions at thejournalnet.com



BRENDA JONES-MATTHEWS, Republican, incumbent

On Nov. 6, voters in Franklin will pick a mayor to lead the city. Reporter Annie Goeller interviewed the candidates on a wide range of issues. Voters have a right to know where the candidates stand. Use these pages as a guide to help you make your voting decision.



FRED PARIS, independent

Jones-Matthews

Property taxes would be first. Would continue to address them by reviewing budgets annually, having employees pay a portion of their insurance and keeping take-home cars parked. Need to watch what we're spending, such as making sure we need full-time employees when we hire them or trying to do more with part-time workers. Everyone needs to have a voice in the tax process. The appointment of the mayor's tax advisory council gives city another set of eyes and ears and a better voice. Need to continue conversations with legislators about property taxes. Economic development is another issue because city has to have jobs. If there are no jobs here, people can't buy houses, and Franklin will end up with nothing. Have to bring people to the community to spend money here. Has worked to bring jobs to Franklin. Also, revitalization and re-energizing the community.



What are the top issues facing Franklin, and how specifically do you plan to address them?

Paris

Property taxes and cost of living are top issues right now. Need to hold line on budgets and look for savings. Supports total property tax replacement. If that is not possible, get school funding and welfare off budget and put an absolute cap on property taxes. Hotel tax would bring in \$350,000 to \$500,000 per year locally. Also, need to bring the right quality industry and other developments to community that bring the ability to drive taxes down. No. 2 issue is crime control. A large percentage of recent drug arrests were made in Franklin. Those arrests have dropped significantly in Franklin because there is no full-time drug officer appointed now. Lots of drug arrests are coming from sheriff's office and Greenwood. Franklin doesn't have the manpower to do them. Crime follows drugs. If we solve drug cases, we can solve a lot of other crime. No. 3 is implementation of 2002 comprehensive plan. A detailed plan was developed in 2002. He was part of committees. A lot of pieces of the plan were overlooked. Plan says city needs good entries. Need to mow regularly along U.S. 31. Is all part of selling the community.

Jones-Matthews

Believes she has a lot to bring to the table. Her work and life experiences make it possible for her to see the big picture. Does what she believes is best for entire community, to lead community and make choices to make the city better for our children and grandchildren, so that they will stay here, live here and work here.



Why are you running for mayor?

Paris

Has asked himself that question. If he becomes mayor, he will take a cut in pay from what he is making now. Family has been in Franklin four generations. "When you grow up in a town like this, for some reason you develop a love for that, that you can't give up on." His background lends well to helping solve problems. Thinks he is the right person at the right time, and will jump in and do it.

Jones-Matthews

Is pretty straightforward. Has learned nobody has all the answers, but a leader needs to know where to go to get them. Leaders cannot do everything by themselves. They have to go to others to get the job done. Wants to engage people, so they want to be a part of what the city is doing and take ownership in city government. When industries come to Franklin, she tells them she wants them to be a community member.



What is your leadership and communication style?

Paris

Doesn't believe in long meetings. "I believe in putting the right people in the right position and holding them accountable." Wants to have good knowledge of what is going on. Has good knowledge of development and how to sell community. With that comes ability to understand what is going on in departments. Would meet one-on-one or in groups and get input and help departments implement plans. In his experience, he has learned a lot about management, how to delegate, lay out plans and get things done.

Jones-Matthews

Being a mother, grandmother. She worked in private sector as a real estate broker. Also worked in public sector, in county and city. "All of those things make us what we are." Started in city government years ago and learned from the ground up how government works. Knows how the system funnels together to the end. "I don't have to be trained, I've already been there."



What education, training, job history and life experience best qualifies you to be mayor?

Paris

Believes mayor's No. 1 job is a sales position. Have to sell department leaders on big picture and sell the concept to the community. When he disagreed with people in the city or schools, has been able to remain on friendly terms. Business is business, and it's not personal. Has experience with being financially challenged because of times when his businesses did not do well. Knows what it's like to really stretch a budget, have no insurance provided. Can understand plight of those who have had unfortunate things happen, people down on their luck, homeless and in need of services. "You can't be who you are unless you've been where you've been."

Jones-Matthews

For economic growth, it's important to diversify. For example, look at huge plants that have closed. It's important to get a good mix of jobs in a community. Need to look at what jobs pay. Franklin is fortunate to have Klaisler, Indiana Hydraulics and Wertz Timber and Veneer come here. City also has good-paying jobs at Promex, Greenwood Machine, Mitsubishi, KYB, NSK and BCC Products. "All of these companies have that confidence in the community." When we invite them, we look at what their history is, what are they going to pay with and without benefits, how that compares to a countywide average and if they're able to sustain themselves? We also look at the number of jobs, but sometimes that isn't as important as the quality of the job. Economic development doesn't happen fast. We've attracted several companies because of the quality of the area. We have to engage them to be a community member, and that starts with building a relationship. Companies expect incentives, but with that comes a commitment to the community, which is a key part of economic development. City is always looking for new companies. City hasn't used up all the land yet, and will continue to entice companies to come here. Will work closely with Johnson County Development Corp.



What will you do to attract new business, industry and higher-paying jobs to Franklin? Where should the city focus its economic growth?

Paris

Franklin has corridors laid out for economic growth. Has experience in commercial and residential sales. Helped bring Kohl's to town. New companies coming will offer benefits and insurance and pay property taxes without abatement. For industrial growth, is the responsibility of mayor to make those contacts. City can develop marketing plan, send letters to companies and be first contact. Wants to sell Franklin first, then get Johnson County Development Corp. to help plan for benefits and any abatements necessary to land company. Franklin doesn't have any spec buildings ready to go. Wants to bring investors in to spec-build commercial buildings for the right tenant who wants to be here.

Jones-Matthews

Retail is a little harder to justify, not that it can't be done because the city gave one to Lowe's in the past. Have to ask: Would they come here anyway? Is tax break something they have to have? Also have to know how many jobs and about pay and benefits. Historically, the economic development commission has been cautious about that. Need to look at every case individually. City follows tax abatements annually. If a company says they will have a certain number of employees and make a certain investment, city makes sure they are doing what they said they would. If all the surrounding states were on the same playing field, the answer could be different. Look at longevity and why company is coming here. Abatements may not always be for 10 years, may be three years depending on the investment. May not support some, such as if the company's investment is not in the city. Situation has to be a win-win.



Under what circumstances would you support granting a business a tax abatement? Do you support tax abatements for retail businesses? When should a business not be given a tax break?

Paris

Normally, would not support tax abatements for retail businesses, especially if they compete with other retailers in the area. Business would have to pay considerably above the average wage scale. Abatements are not for jobs that offer \$8, \$10 or \$11 per hour. Is not supportive of tax abatements that just relocate businesses from one Indiana city to another. That does not help Indiana grow. "There has to be other reasons for them to relocate other than a tax abatement."

Jones-Matthews

One thing legislature could have done was allowed us to have a food and beverage tax when the county approved it. Everybody that eats out or buys a soda would pay an extra 1 percent. If our parks department sells a soda, we have to pay a sales tax and pay the county that 1 percent food and beverage tax. Half of that goes to the county, and half goes to Indianapolis. Franklin gets nothing. That type of tax is less intrusive than some of the other ideas being looked at.



Name one proposal the state legislature could approve that would help Franklin.

Paris

Property tax repeal. Is so important to consider any way possible to get rid of property taxes. The entire economy is in disarray, with repossessed houses, dropping property values. Legislature could offer a transfer tax when property is sold. Could find other taxes to get rid of property taxes. "(Getting rid of property taxes) would spur our economy more than all these other initiatives they are throwing out, and then we don't have to play the tax abatement game."

Jones-Matthews

Has always followed it. It's important for residents to know what is going on around them. Helps them make educated decisions. Governments can't make decisions behind closed doors. There are times when information will not be available because of statutory reasons, when something is under investigation or because of health privacy protection laws. "But anything else that is supposed to be open to the public will be open to the public."



What is your understanding of the Open Door Law? Will you follow the letter and spirit of the law?

Paris

Absolutely. Should be discussing only lawsuits and personnel matters in private. Would need to read and understand law completely. Feels he has been victim over the years of having things discussed in private that affected projects of his. Has no problem with being open. "For this community to recover and grow, we have to be able to share information with the entire community."

Jones-Matthews

Property taxes affect the quality of life of some people. She is working on that and will continue to do that. There are other things she can't do anything about, other than talk to legislators or write national leaders. Has met with people about whether Franklin has a homeless problem. Depends on whom you talk to. Best thing she can do as mayor is to ensure the community is safe, keep it as clean as possible and provide open government. Good parks add to quality of life. Need to look at housing stock. Some are in disrepair or vacant. Need to put a plan in place that includes more than tearing down a structure. Maybe city needs to find ways to reclaim houses and help people live in them.



What is the most serious quality-of-life issue facing the residents of Franklin? If elected, what would you do about it?

Paris

Biggest problem most people have today is the stretching of their budgets so tight, partially because of property taxes. Quality of life also involves crime, which costs all of us money. He looks at quality of life differently. If he can raise overall values of community, including real estate, moral and economic, that's what affects quality of life. When city can attract right quality of homes and jobs and help people who struggle the most, the entire community thrives.

Jones-Matthews

Anytime you think something is not right, you need to step back and think. Conflicts have to be disclosed. There is a form for that. She doesn't sell real estate because she thinks that is a conflict. She could have made a lot of money for land if negotiating for personal gain, but that is a huge conflict. In communities this size, you will know the people who work for you, but you need to be cautious and cognizant, and any conflicts should be disclosed.



What would you consider a conflict of interest for a mayor and how would you avoid the appearance of conflicts?

Paris

The classic one of putting family in government jobs, which is not done much anymore. Has no relatives in government jobs. Doesn't know of any conflicts. Has seen people get caught in conflict in business when they have appearance they are financially gaining from a project. As mayor, have to help build the economy without taking personal gain from it. "You make sure you're not doing something for your own good instead of the good of the community. If something appears to be a conflict, you better be able to explain yourself very well and give a chance for debate."

Jones-Matthews

If Franklin has more huge subdivisions, that puts a strain on city services. If city attracts new subdivisions, need to look at quality of development and base price of homes. That will give us an idea of future growth and the number of children, which gives an indication of strain on the school corporation. Maybe need to attract higher-end homes. Everybody needs to live someplace, and people choose where they live for various reasons. Some need space, some look at price. We need to look at all of that, see what the housing stock is, know what is being built out and what is not. Look on a case-by-case basis. She would like to see older homes sitting vacant reclaimed.



Should Franklin attract more housing subdivisions? If not, why not? If so, what types of homes does the city need?

Paris

Franklin ultimately will grow, but our development standards should be rigid. Need to protect value of people who are already here. If attracting a new subdivision adds unneeded housing stock and decreases values for others, then it is not best. If developers want to come here because land is cheap, not because of a need for housing, housing needs to pay its way. Developers need to pay enough to build infrastructure that won't need repair in five or 10 years, pay into schools and parks and not drain the community. City doesn't need to attract more beginner housing until able to stabilize the value of homes that are here.

Jones-Matthews

Is a priority for her, and she thinks it is for many members of the community. Downtown is the focal point because Franklin is the county seat. Need a vibrant, energized downtown. Downtown won't be the same as it was when she was a child but can be every bit as good. Need to work with local organizations, such as chamber of commerce, and county as partners. Tough in all downtowns because commercial build-out happens on outskirts. Downtown has challenges. She sees having all those buildings filled. What goes in may not be exactly what she would want, but it may be what the community wants or needs. Grants are important because the city doesn't have all the money to put into downtown, but the city will have to do some things too. For example, the city parking lot looks horrible, and officials are meeting with the adjacent landowner to talk about the surroundings of the parking lot. Has to be public-private partnership. Can't be afraid to take a chance when businesses come in. The more people you have downtown, the more probability you have of spurring growth. Planning department is looking at guidelines for what to do with buildings. The Artcraft Theatre and the Willard are both draws to downtown.



Is downtown revitalization a priority for you? Why? What is your vision for downtown, and what will you do to achieve it? What can be done about downtown beyond applying for beautification grants?

Paris

Downtown stability is vital to him. His problem with revitalization is ignoring other parts of the 2002 comprehensive plan, which says to first address entries into the city. Revitalization should be accomplished as part of an overall plan to improve entryways into the city. Along the interstate, there are chain-link fences covered in mulberry trees and coming down Jefferson Street, the housing is in bad need of repair. "Franklin has everything it needs to be as good or better than Zionsville, Broad Ripple, Fishers." City needs to focus on improving entries and housing stock within eight to 10 blocks of downtown. That would drive a need for services and shops downtown. Should not focus on large retail downtown, such as a grocery store, because that's not possible at this time. People will not pay more to buy something downtown. Need to stabilize downtown, though it is not too unstable now, and remain service-oriented in the short-term. Need to focus on improving entryways and attracting homeowners to revitalize housing stock, including people that will be willing to spend money on downtown services. Then the city can do redevelopment. Should keep aesthetics of buildings same. Would be beautiful to do a redevelopment along the creek, but that is long-term. Redevelopment takes vision, planning, grants and time.

Jones-Matthews

People want sidewalks, streets, safety, trash collection and clean properties. Have to be careful. "To always cut, cut, cut, cut doesn't necessarily mean you're going to do a better job." Need to continue to look at departments and employees. Need to use part-time people, and we are doing that. City has not made huge renovations. Capital expenditures were cut by 50 percent. Need to review personnel, may use more part-timers, which saves insurance and pension costs. Need to look at going to central purchasing, which is as simple as everyone buying pens and cleaning supplies together for the best price. If city makes decisions to increase the budget, need to take long look. Salaries have stayed relatively low. Were raised a few years ago, last year workers got \$500 and this year, it was 3 percent. Elected officials got nothing last year and 1.5 percent this year. Hired new police officers, and city is hiring two new full-time firefighters next year. Always want more, but also need to work with what we have. Her wish list is to do all sidewalks in town, repair all streets, but can't do all that.



The annual budget helps set the agendas, goals and future of the city. What items should be increased? What spending should be cut?

Paris

With the property tax dilemma and the strain on residents, he doesn't believe anything should be increased. City needs to hold a flat line in the budget for the next couple of years. If he is elected, his job will be to dig into budgets with department heads and look for savings. Everything will be up for review. City has to get control of overtime spending in almost all departments. Documents show city is out of control in handling personnel in some departments. City has to help personnel understand they have to do a better job of using manpower. For example, in the police department, in the 2006 budget there was a plan to add four officers and a full-time drug officer. But the department didn't hire the full-time drug officer. Fire department approved hiring six new full-time medics, but they weren't put in place. So there are things in the budget that don't make sense. Until he is in the position, he couldn't say where cuts would be, but it will all be under review.

Jones-Matthews

Yes, they do, and it probably should have happened 20 years ago. We are already paying for it because the city passed an ordinance in 1998, and a tax for drainage and a fire department building started in 1999. Been discussions for at least 20 years where a station should be built. Studies have been done, and they pinpointed north because of housing, industrial park and travel time. Need to look at everything else, where the headquarters are and where second station is. Ask can fire department do the job it needs to do? Can also use TIF dollars, if near district. Need to look at how the city would man a new station and meet standards. "It's way past time to get that done." Don't want to build a station until the city can put people in there. Board of works will take quotes to study the structures the city is using now. Ask, can the city build a second story on Station 21 on Main Street, can we use the land, is it safe? Ask how long can we stay in this station and what can we do to make it better for firefighters who stay there? Need to find out what the shelf life is on both stations. City is also growing east, and we need to be sure safety is addressed out there. She would not think the city would close stations, but there may be a rearrangement of staffing.



Does the city need another fire station? If so, where should it be, and how would you pay for it and when should this happen? Should any of the existing fire stations be closed if a new one is built?

Paris

That was an issue eight years ago and still is not resolved. Question was brought up about the condition of current fire stations and the city plans to hire a consultant to review the conditions. Has two problems with that. City has already looked at the stations many times, and he wants to know why the city spends money on a consultant when Franklin has a planner, engineer and building inspector. City limits have pushed north, and we need to look at the location of stations. May be necessary to relocate instead of adding a third station. City has money in a special account toward building a new station. Within first year of his term, city will move forward to resolve the quality of fire protection for the entire community instead of putting the issue on a back burner. There is \$1 million in the fund already, along with potential grants and the capital improvement fund. Isn't sure how to pay for all of the costs. The city has been offered free ground multiple times and turned it down. "Maybe we don't build a Taj Mahal, but we build a fire station that is adequate to serve people on this end of town." North side isn't all the city should study. People in Windstar and the southern part of city feel under-served by fire protection.

Jones-Matthews

City did spend a lot in overtime. Lost a lot of firefighters in a year. The hiring process in government is not the same as the private sector. Overtime did not impact the tax rate. She gets a report every day on overtime and is watching what is spent every day. When the decision comes, do we have someone work overtime or do we run short? City must provide public safety. City has gone to part-time paramedics, and the goal is to have them available 24 hours. City needs to hire more paramedics and more firefighters, but not all at once. Longevity pay was likely done to raise low salaries, but the option was probably not the best way to handle low salaries. When the last person is gone from the old longevity plan, she is not sure what will happen. No one wants to reduce firefighters' pension. Would never support reinstating the 30 percent longevity plan. City needs to look at how to compete and get people to stay. Need to find out what is best for the city and how to stop being a training field, where people leave after being trained. If the city could save money by hiring more people, she would advocate hiring more. Need to take in-depth study on how to do better with spending, what can be cut, how many employees are needed and long-term cost.



The fire department spent \$397,780 in overtime pay in 2006 and is on track to pay \$288,000 this year. Firefighters and police officers want the city to reinstate a longevity pay plan. How can the city be most efficient in public safety expenses? If the answer is to hire more workers, would you support that? Why or why not? Do you support reinstating the longevity pay? Why or why not?

Paris

Does not support reinstating longevity pay. City needs to find a different vehicle to bring young hires up to a more level pay scale within first five years on a department. As he has aged, he's realized he doesn't want to work as hard at age 52 as he did at 22. A young worker will pull his weight. Need to find way to balance pay scale without bringing longevity pay back. Longevity pay is not a solution to create a fair pay scale. Current administration says overtime is out of whack because of officers who left and were compensated for comp time, vacation, etc. That is part of the problem. Some of them left for more pay, city lost others because of conditions in the department that are unacceptable to them, such as a lack of communication, eliminating reserve officers or improper maintenance of equipment. Maybe city should work harder to retain workers. Should look at creating investments or funds that accrue. City needs to have money set aside for comp time, etc. The mayor, in what he believes is a political move, is releasing tax-increment financing money, and it may be time to look at putting TIF money into investment fund for future obligations. Is not supportive of hiring more people while the property tax issue is ongoing.

Jones-Matthews

Says she has seen her opponent's signs in yards where the city has asked the owner to clean up their properties. People see junk on porches, grass that is not mowed and they will not be proud of the city. Has seen some movement from citations. City will continue to write citations, mow grass, but it's sometimes like chasing your tail. City will work with people who need help to clean up. She has called the street department and asked to pick up brush when someone has cleaned up. Dealing with nuisance properties is a never-ending job. Franklin Heritage has done good job, but can't do all of it. There are cases where a house needs to be torn down. That is a last resort, but the city will do it and has done it.



The city has had several complaints about nuisance properties. What can the city do about homes and properties that are becoming nuisances?

Paris

Talked to a homeowner the other day who was told by the city he needed to paint his house within 30 days. His answer was that until some finds a solution for property taxes, he doesn't have the money and the city doesn't have authority, except for health and safety concerns. He was worried they would raise his assessment if he made repairs. City needs to focus on increasing overall value so people will buy homes and fix them up. In the meantime, if property is unsafe or breaks code, the city should be able to pursue enforcement or legal action should be taken. City has plenty of ordinances to handle that. There are too many vacant homes, but if the city increases in overall value and increases desire of people to live in town, the problem takes care of itself.

Jones-Matthews

"When we do a budget, we don't do it irresponsibly." When the city gets notice that the budget is approved, if it comes back and isn't where she thinks it should be, city will go back and cut. The budget will have some increase, such as 3 percent salary raises, but the city has to keep the budget in check. City will continue to assist people when they contact her. The property tax system in Indiana is broken and grossly unfair. She will continue working on that, legislatively, locally and whatever else she can do to get these things in check.



What are you going to do about property taxes?

Paris

Has always paid a lot of attention to it. His company is affected greatly by taxes, and it doesn't get homestead credits. Can hold the city's budget line and be involved at meetings at all levels to be the voice of the residents of Franklin. Has been to school boards and city and county councils and told them to be careful about spending money because cost of living is rising and wages are not. Would ask people to get more involved. Would work to bring in retail and industry, along with true relief at state level. Wants state to abolish property taxes, but short of that would like to see property taxes taken down as low as possible and capped. As mayor, he can have something to do with that. Not about appointing a council to look into the issue, he can go, be involved and pay attention.

Jones-Matthews

"I would not support raising property taxes, but that doesn't mean it's not going to happen." She doesn't support raising the local income tax. But services have to be provided to the community. One tax that is less intrusive on families and pocketbooks is the food and beverage tax, but that option is not available to cities and towns without special legislation. Believes there is a fair way to do property taxes if that stays in place. She wants to see real progress made in the next legislative session. Need to look at fair, equitable system across the board that is fair to residents, not just homeowners, but also renters who pay taxes, too.



Under what circumstances would you support raising property taxes or any tax?

Paris

"I can see no situation where I would be in favor of raising property taxes." City had the option to cap the tax rate in 2003 and chose to sue the state and raise the rate, where other communities decided to bite the bullet and stay at the same rate. If state eliminates property taxes, he would support increasing income, sales, hotel and other service taxes. Would be easy to justify paying tax to transfer property. He suggested the tax to State Rep. Milo Smith, R-Columbus, who said Realtor organizations are against the idea. He worries that some legislators are listening to special interest groups instead of doing what is best for taxpayers.

Jones-Matthews

City is running pretty bare bones right now. Would look at employees, such as when someone leaves, does the city need a full-time person or can the city fill position with a part-time employee? She doesn't hire for police and fire departments because that is done by merit board. City should no longer automatically put someone into a position unless they are needed. Looking into central purchasing for supplies. She would like to say the city could reduce costs in other areas, such as trash collection, but realistically doesn't see that happening. "The more we grow, the more burden will be placed there."



Name three areas of city government where spending could be cut in the future.

Paris

There are six to seven departments, including police, fire, planning and parks, where the city could find ways to hold the line. When he interviews people for positions, wants to find people with leadership skills who are knowledgeable about budgets and budget management. Will ask people in the departments to help find ways to cut spending. People have told him there are areas that can be cut. City should lean more on volunteers. There is a tremendous amount of talent in the city. Maybe they can help find ways to provide services while holding the line on spending.

Jones-Matthews

Yes, they should be. City needs to look at each of those districts. She has one site in mind that was created when TIF districts were new. The city has gotten smarter. Need to look at what's left to be built and what infrastructure is needed. City needs to keep an eye on districts not built out and how the funds are used in that district. Shouldn't deplete the fund in one year. Money should be used for roads, drainage and incentives for companies moving to that district. She had one district where she wanted to let the tax money flow through this year, but the city's financial adviser said the city can't do that. The redevelopment commission voted not to put taxes into that district in 2008, so taxes will flow through to all the taxing entities because there are no projects on deck for that money. If the area is built out, bonds are paid for and the infrastructure is complete, the city needs to evaluate the district. TIF districts are not meant to be forever. They have to support themselves.



Should tax-increment financing districts be re-evaluated if they're running up unused surpluses? What projects need to be completed in the districts?

Paris

In the TIF district the city just pulled money out of, every parcel has been sold by the original developer. Would have thought district should be closed, but has not evaluated district to be sure. Is not a huge fan of TIF districts because they bleed money away from schools and other services. Would try to find other avenues to attract industry. When TIF districts are in place, the city should always evaluate them and close them as soon as possible. Hasn't yet evaluated what projects are needed, but the potential ones would be extension of roadways, drainage and city services to the edges of districts.

Jones-Matthews

When the city gets the budget back, which is always advertised high, if it is not within reason, they will go back to the table. City will go back and look and reduce it as much as possible. City has no control over schools. The school board is acting in what it believes to be the best interest. "It's a reality, they are doing remodeling. We do have a school out here, and that debt service is going to come on down the line."



Franklin taxpayers already are preparing for a tax hike next year because of school projects. What will you do from the city's side to lessen the impact on their tax bills?

Paris

Hold the line on the budget and will do everything possible to move forward with new industry and retail that will help offset taxes. Would work with school and library and express that we have all got to hold the line until taxpayers get relief. City will soon be getting wheel tax money that wasn't there before. Need to take hard look at how to spend the money, and maybe can offset the budget with that money. If he is elected, would assume a budget he didn't do, so would be doubly important to get department heads in place and work with the city council to trim.

Jones-Matthews

After she came into office, she thought the city could do that. She thought the city could share with the county on fuel costs and was told they would get the same rate. City did reduce costs. Through the 911 system, city is sharing with county, cities and towns. City needs to do more of that. Discussed sharing some expenses with Franklin College. City can partner with other agencies and look at how to combine services. Need to look at all government offices and ask, is this needed as an elected position? Do we need this person or service?



One discussion at the state level to reduce property taxes is to consolidate services and cut spending. How could this be done in Franklin?

Paris

Has some ideas. One is to realign school districts and city services. Look at having city and county police departments work together. Have to look at those options and the cost-effectiveness of departments. All options are on the table. Need to take every single service and ask: Are we duplicating with something already available? Can we consolidate and offer better or same quality of service? Need to get everyone to work together.

Jones-Matthews

Had a hard time with supporting some options with the figures she saw and hopes to learn more. Is going to take several years to remove property taxes. With the local option income tax and raising state income tax, instead of taking out of this pocket, you would take from both. Has a problem with that. With taxes on sales, food and beverage and hotel or innkeeper tax, people traveling through pay that. Those options seem to be less-intrusive and fairer because everyone pays. No one is exempt. If someone lives on assistance, and they spend a little extra cash, they pay it. "Everybody is paying their fair share. If you can afford it, you pay it. If you can't, you just don't buy it."



What other revenue source would you support to replace or reduce property taxes? Why?

Paris

Some options are increases in sales, income or hotel taxes. Also consider a tax on property transfers. When people transfer property, such as when it is sold, they would pay a 1 percent to 2 percent tax. Can be part of closing expenses when homes are sold, and people can budget that because they know it will be an expense when they sell a house. If done right, the state can get rid of property taxes and put Indiana on path to recovery of property values and expansion of industry. Businesses will come because it's the right place to be, not because of tax abatements.

Jones-Matthews

Would need to look at what the impact is of each of these groups, such as how much money they are putting back into the community. Some are huge employers. Need to weigh costs against benefits. Churches have historically been tax-exempt, and if some were taxed, they would no longer be in existence. Those groups give us quality of life. For others, need to look at what they bring to the community. If they weren't here, the city wouldn't have that employment. She is not sure of the benefit of taxing those organizations. Legislature needs to think long and hard.



Lawmakers have also considered requiring nonprofit organizations to pay property taxes, such as churches, Franklin College, the Indiana Masonic Home or the Franklin United Methodist Community. Would you support this idea? Why or why not?

Paris

The first priority is to repeal property taxes. There are unfair issues caused by certain groups not being required to pay. He doesn't see any benefit in having true nonprofits pay property taxes. Have to look and at least question the nonprofit status of single-family detached homes and doubles. Ask why would they not pay taxes when other units do? If owners can come up with a good, solid answer, maybe they will still be tax-exempt, but they should still have to answer the question.

Jones-Matthews

"That is an unfair question because I don't know how I can make those changes on anything if I'm not there. So you can't promise something you don't have." Have to wait until you get there. If elected, that will be her administration.



Are you planning any changes to city departments or department managers?

Paris

Has been looking over a lot of budgets, but it's not his job yet. Doesn't plan any changes until it's his job. If elected, will sit down with department heads, go over budgets and ask for input from workers in departments. Believes it is important for department heads to be part of the community. As he reviews departments, would look for leadership actively involved in the community and hopefully living within the community.