

## Beacon News Candidate Questionnaire – Feb. 2008 Primary Election

### Jim MacRunnels – Kane County Board Chairman

1. Why are you running for this office?

As a taxpayer, I have seen my taxes double in the last three years. My ideas are based on 20 years of financial service experience. I attended nearly 50 County Board meetings in the past year. I obtained copies of financial documents and spending contracts to determine **how much** was being spent, and **which companies** were being paid to do the county's work.

My findings were alarming. For starters, the Kane County budget has increased from \$162 million in 2005 to \$302 million in 2007. Our county budget has nearly doubled in two years! As reported in some of our local newspapers, the County's consulting contracts have also increased by a whopping 171%.

I plan to put an end to this irresponsible spending, decrease the amount of consulting contracts, and put an end to the "pay-to-play" politics that has become so popular with the current administration.

2. Do you support the construction of the Prairie Parkway, and will you push for funding for the project?

No, I do not support the construction of the Prairie Parkway for one simple reason. The Prairie Parkway will wipe out some of Kane County's precious remaining prime farmland. The Parkway will not alleviate traffic problems that currently exist on Route 47 in Kane County, as proponents for the highway claim. I question the needs analysis that was conducted to justify this highway. Furthermore, the amount of federal funds required to complete this project would be better used to upgrade, widen and improve existing state roads and bridges within Kane County.

3. What are the other major needs in the county when it comes to roads and transportation?

One issue that stands out is the Longmeadow Parkway Project. I don't believe the residents on the north end of the county should have to pay a toll when their neighbors to the south (Sterns Road Bridge) will travel free of charge. Federal and State funding exists for maintaining and building roads and bridges, and we don't need to hire a consultant to obtain this funding. The county staff has the talent and the resources to research and submit the necessary documents to the appropriate state or federal agency in order to acquire transportation funding.

4. How can the County Board make sure Kane County has a thriving public-transit system?

Our accessibility to trains has improved, but there is a need to examine the effectiveness of bus transportation in Kane County. I recommend that we continue to work with PACE to examine ridership levels. If ridership on certain routes is acceptable, then let's strengthen those routes. If ridership on other routes is low, then consider cutting those routes. Additionally, para-transit options such as Park n' Ride locations are helping. We should continue to assess current locations by surveying users and examine ways to improve access by exploring other locations, if necessary.

5. Is Kane County doing everything it can to preserve farmland and/or forest preserve land?

No. Since the current administration is supporting the Prairie Parkway, then we are ensuring that prime farmland will be eliminated when the bulldozers come through. As I stated before, one way to preserve farmland is to stop the Parkway from being built. In terms of forest preserve land, the Forest Preserve District has successfully lobbied residents to pass referendums which have helped to secure open space for the future.

6. Do you think it is more cost-effective for the county to use consultants for certain duties, or to pay to do these things in-house? What consultants would you eliminate, or what duties would you continue to do with outside help?

As a taxpayer in this county for 18 years, I am concerned when the amount of money spent on consulting contracts increases by 171%. Kane County possesses a very talented staff of people who are at or near the top of their respective professions. These individuals are transportation and development planners, respected law and code enforcement specialists and financial experts. There will always be a need to hire a consultant for a highly specialized project, but when the contracts increase that dramatically in such a short period of time, it is time to ask tough questions and learn why this is happening. It is always more cost-effective to have in-house staff do the work, or acquire the proper tools to do the work. Do you hire an outside graphic designer at \$125 per hour, or ask the staff graphic designer to do the work at \$30 per hour? Case closed.

7. How would you foster and promote cooperation between the county and municipalities on development, transportation, housing and other issues?

My plan to foster cooperation among jurisdictions is to hold quarterly workshop meetings with city leaders, elected officials and municipal department heads to discuss their long range goals and plans. Lack of communication can result in lost opportunities. If two or more cities are considering a major capital purchase for public safety purposes, it makes sense for the cities to collaboratively purchase this equipment to reduce costs. Another example involves communication regarding utility replacement and construction projects. Sharing these plans can save money and eliminate unnecessary duplication of service interruptions for residents.

8. How important is water-resource planning in Kane County in the coming years? Is the County doing enough to plan for future water use?

Extremely important. I read recently that the U.S. experiences 237,000 water main breaks each year, causing our country to lose 6 billion gallons of drinkable, usable water each day. Additionally, it will cost at least \$300 billion to replace unstable pipelines over the next 20 years in this country. We have been fortunate in Kane County to have adequate water supplies unlike areas in the drought-stricken southeast.

While these are alarming national figures, the best way for the county to plan for the future is to ask our municipal neighbors to start measuring the number of water main breaks they incur each year, and look into low-cost maintenance solutions. This is an easy first step toward conserving water, and reducing the amount of costly repairs.

9. What are the other issues facing Kane County that the board must address?

I don't believe that the issue of the jail is resolved from a budget standpoint. The jail will be overcrowded the day it opens, and Kane County will still be spending close to \$2 million per year to bus inmates to other county correctional facilities.

Our animal control facility is currently housing a handful of dogs at an annual cost of \$1 million. Nothing but the best for our homeless pets.

And, as I stated before, I plan to put an end to "pay-to-play" politics. If elected, I will ask my fellow County Board Members to join me in advocating the principles of House Bill 1 (HB1) into our Kane County practices. HB1 provides that State officers and employees are prohibited from obtaining state contracts. It also prohibits a business that supplies a state contract bid from making a contribution to the officeholder responsible for awarding that contract.