

The BeaconNews

Candidate Questionnaire

If the economy continues on its current path, what is the first step you would take to reduce spending? Would you cut jobs in that effort?

The first step I will take to reduce spending is to go line-by-line through the budget to weed out wasteful spending. For example, the current mayor is spending too much on lawyers, a lavish practice I will halt. As part of the process of going line-by-line through the budget, I will consult with employees throughout the City (not just department heads) to find creative ways to cut spending. I will make every effort not to cut jobs and I am absolutely opposed to cutting critical City services such as fire and police services.

Would you consider raising taxes in order to plug a budget hole?

While people are hurting so badly this year, I don't believe government should raise taxes, and I will not raise taxes this year. Next year, I will consider reinstating the food and beverage tax — a tax that frequently applies to non-residents. The food and beverage tax generates roughly \$600,000 in revenue for the City. If the current mayor had not cut irresponsibly cut the food and beverage tax four years ago, we probably would have no budget deficit today (the total amount cut over the four years would plug this year's City budget deficit with money to spare).

How, specifically, can voters distinguish your approach from your opponents' on economic development? On job growth?

There is a huge difference between my approach to development and the current mayor's approach. My priority is the residents of St. Charles. I will ensure that our City evaluates every development proposal with an eye toward its impact on the community as a whole and ensure that each proposed development serves the interests of our community, not just the developers. The City and its staff must always ask: "Is this development in the best interest of the people of St. Charles?" We want developers to make money developing, but their projects must serve our community's best interests.

I will focus on bringing businesses to our City. Bringing businesses to Downtown, the Charlestowne Mall and to the empty office space throughout our City is good for jobs, good for the tax rolls (because businesses pay taxes) and good for all of us who want a vibrant community. As an attorney who has spent years working with successful businesses, I know that success is bred through encouraging innovative ideas and a focused approach. I will use my experience and my talents and seek to use the skills of others – for example, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown St. Charles Partnership -

to focus the public and private sector on marketing our Great City to businesses, thereby bringing businesses to our City.

By contrast, the current mayor is not objective when it comes to development and has failed the City when it comes to attracting businesses and job growth. The empty buildings on First Street, in Charlestowne Mall and throughout our City are proof that the current mayor has failed to bring businesses to our City. Furthermore, the current mayor is pro development and does not look out for the interests of the community. It's no secret why this is. The City gives zoning changes to the developers. The mayor then sells cabinets to the developers. And these developers then turn around and fund the mayor's political campaign. While the mayor has been an elected official, zoning changes have been given to the First Street developers, Renaux Manor developers and the Collins Group developers. The mayor has sold cabinets to the First Street and Renaux Manor developers and accepted significant campaign contributions from all three groups.

Please list a few ways you would encourage new businesses to locate to St. Charles. Do you believe financial incentives, such as tax rebates, are a good tool for commercial development, or should they be used sparingly?

I believe we must begin marketing our great City to businesses so that those ready to move realize that St. Charles is a great place for business. As explained above, as an attorney who has spent years working with successful businesses of all sizes (family owned businesses, mid-sized businesses and publicly traded companies), I know that success is bred through encouraging innovative ideas and a focused approach. I will use my experience and my talents and seek to use the skills of others – for example, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown St. Charles Partnership, and other committees and clubs - to focus the public and private sector on marketing our Great City to businesses, thereby bringing businesses to our City. I will use tax break and other incentives sparingly and only when necessary and economically justified.

What can be done to responsibly develop the city's west side? Would you consider mixed-use developments? Is there a way to expand the corporate tax base to decrease property taxes?

To responsibly develop our City's west side, we need a responsible developer with a reasonable and responsible development plan. We need community input (and a developer that seeks community input) so that the developer can make money developing, but does so with a development plan that meets the needs of our community. We also need a City staff that is always focused on our community and continually asking the question: "What is in the best interest of all of us?" Finally, the economy must be right for the development.

I would consider a mixed-use development if a mixed-used development suits the needs of our City as a whole, is supported by the community, and will be a benefit to all of us, not a burden to local residents and the community.

Yes, there is a way to expand the corporate tax base. We do that by bringing businesses to our City. As I explain in other parts of this questionnaire, I will use my talents and skills to bring businesses to our great City.

Citywide, what are your top three specific priorities?

- Ensuring strong financial management and a balanced budget for our City.
- Ensuring reasonable and responsible development for our City.
- Bringing businesses to our City.

Ensuring Strong Financial Management for our City. This year St. Charles is running more than a million dollar deficit and cutting City services, while at the same time the current mayor has been raising our property taxes. A few years ago, the current mayor irresponsibly cut the food and beverage tax (which often taxes outsiders) without properly planning for the future – as it turns out, the amount cut would have balanced this year’s budget deficit. Now the city administrator has asked the mayor to consider re-imposing the food and beverage tax.

While the economy is hurting all of us, crucial City services are the last place we should look to cut. The current mayor originally proposed laying off a firefighter and reducing police services. Recently, the city administrator proposed not laying off the firefighter (while, at the same time the city administrator continued to forecast more than a million dollar budget deficit). Cutting firefighters and reducing police services is a poor way of addressing the budget concerns facing our City.

As mayor, my priority will be to go line-by-line through the budget to weed out wasteful spending. Moreover, I will consult with employees throughout the City (not just department heads) to find creative ways to cut spending. While people are hurting so badly in this down economy, I don’t believe government should raise taxes, and I will not raise taxes this year. However, next year, I will consider reinstating the food and beverage tax—a tax that frequently applies to non-residents— because it generates roughly \$600,000 in revenue for the City.

Ensuring Reasonable and Responsible Development in Our City. We need reasonable and responsible development in our City, with an objective mayor who will ensure that the City looks out for our City’s best interests when zoning changes are made and tax incentives provided to developers.

Recently, Shodeen proposed building an eight-story, four-parking-garage urban “Towne Center” on the west side and another developer is asking for significant zoning changes on the east side near Charlestown Mall. I believe City planning should be coordinated with an eye toward the community as a whole. The City (and its staff) must always ask: “Is this development in the best interest of the people of St. Charles?” For example, why would we want to give tax breaks to Shodeen and approve his proposed urban “Towne Center”? We already have a “city center” along First Street, a place where businesses are struggling and residents don’t want to go — how is it in the best interests of St. Charles to add a new city center that may flood the schools when our first city center needs help? We need reasonable and responsible development that is in the best interests of all of us.

Bringing Businesses to the City. Bringing businesses to First Street, the Charlestowne Mall and to the empty office space throughout our City is good for jobs, good for the tax rolls (because businesses pay taxes) and good for all of us who want a vibrant community. As explained above, I believe we must begin marketing our great City to businesses so that those ready to move realize that St. Charles is a great place for business. As an attorney who has spent years working with successful businesses of all sizes (family owned businesses, mid-sized businesses and publicly traded companies), I know that success is bred through encouraging innovative ideas and a focused approach. I will use my experience and my talents and seek to use the skills of others – for example, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown St. Charles Partnership, and other committees and clubs - to focus the public and private sector on marketing our Great City to businesses, thereby bringing businesses to our City. I will use tax break and other incentives sparingly and only when necessary and economically justified.

What’s working well in St. Charles these days? What’s not?

The people of St. Charles are our greatest asset. We have a fantastic City that has been going in the wrong direction for the past few years. I have detailed some of the things taking us in the wrong direction elsewhere in this questionnaire. I’m running to bring positive change to our City and ensure that we put St. Charles first.

For the challenger – Why should voters choose you over the incumbent?

Voters should choose me over the current mayor because I will use my talent and skills to bring positive change to our City and ensure that we put St. Charles first. I will:

- Guarantee strong financial management and a balanced budget;

- Maintain critical City services and don't cut police and fire services;
- Ensure our City government is responsive to all our needs
- Ensure reasonable and responsible development in our City; and,
- Ensure we attract businesses to our City.

As an attorney and former general counsel of a company, I have extensive experience with businesses of all types – sole proprietorships, mid-size businesses, publicly traded companies. Thus, I have the skills needed to manage our City's budget and attract businesses to our City.

As a parent, soccer coach and concerned citizen who believes City government should serve our residents (not the other way around), I will ensure City government is responsive to all our citizens.

For the incumbent – Why should you be re-elected over the challengers?

