

# The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

## Corey Dixon's Answers

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

**ANSWER:** If elected, I would either leave the leaf collection to our individual neighborhoods to decide what method of pickup they prefer or create one single uniform method for the entire city. Cost effectiveness needs to play the major role in the evaluation, but our residents happiness will need to override cost as long as we are willing to absorb it if necessary.

2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

**ANSWER:** As a Commissioner with Planning and Zoning, I have a unique perspective on this subject. Our city's current Economic Development(ED) policies have very good intentions, but there is always room for improvement. Now, there are many different factors that one can lend to the results of why our ED is where it is, but in general, ED has improved. We are now a major destination for businesses, which isn't something we've always been able to say. Much of that has to do with the economy rebounding and where the ED work has been contracted to. There are some areas for improvement in our relationships with the Chamber and Downtown Neighborhood Association, which are the organizations mostly responsible for this field, but they are doing a good job. City Council can make some tweaks in those relationships that will better benefit our city residents and I believe both entities would be open to such discussions. So, if elected i plan to make the appropriate proposals to enhance the relationships with both organizations in addition to exploring other opportunities for growth.

3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold? **ANSWER:** Yes, absolutely.

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?  
**ANSWER:** Yes, absolutely.

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**ANSWER:** No. The City should use one of the existing Commissions to draft a plan, if it so chooses to draft a plan at all; and that decision should be made by the Mayor and City Council with the input from City staff and City residents. I personally would be in favor of such of move. We would just need to ask ourselves, "Why waste additional resources when we have a capable citizenry already appointed by our elected officials who are more than capable of taking on a plan of this magnitude?" So yes, we should sell properties where possible and have a plan for doing so, but also be careful to not waste additional resources in the process.

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**ANSWER:** There are some properties in flood zones that we should not sell and not because they can't, but because it's in our best interest to hold on to them. Outside of properties with safety concerns or properties being held for strategic reasons, every property should be placed on the table. If elected, no waste is safe. I'm always open to reducing cost and tax burdens for our taxpayers.

4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**ANSWER: Yes, absolutely and I'll take it a step further by saying that this method of showing "true" figures should also be applied to EVERY other area of charge and expense within the City budget. I currently have a ready assembled plan to bring that to fruition, which would allow a resident to obtain clarity when figuring tax expenses; that will also benchmark those taxes against similar communities for justification purposes.**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**ANSWER: Yes, but not solely for the purpose of judging taxing policies because only seeing numbers will not do that. Simply put, they need to be shown because it's the right thing to do. People have the right to know why they are being taxed and what that tax has been historically.**

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5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**ANSWER: Since I've been serving as a Commissioner with Planning & Zoning, I've had plenty of experiences with our revitalization efforts. As mentioned, the City has spent a lot of money on trying to revamp and revitalize our downtown. Some of the efforts have been very successful, while others have not, but I believe that even those areas will turn around as our local economy continues to grow. The amount of money being spent is massive and the City can continue to spend more and I don't suggest that we do. Not until the City produces a solid Planning & Zoning plan to correct or eliminate things such as Conditional Use, our efforts will be futile. The proper foundation to any successful downtown area is attractive zoning, which our downtown does not currently have as a whole.**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**ANSWER: We definitely paid a price, but I believe that there will be a great return on that investment. It's important to our downtown revitalization efforts and our current local businesses who need the foot traffic, which brings in new customers.**

Question 5c: Do you see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**ANSWER: Yes.**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer: Yes, but the City should also explore cost saving measures such as having a local business/businesses, organizations or person(s) sponsor the project. So, I have no problem with the city leading such a project for most safety compliance issues and accountability, but I do caution against us not exploring cost savings measures and then passing that cost on to our residents.**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**ANSWER: The Hemmens is a huge part of downtown. Simply put, it should be transformed into an event destination space that the entire Fox Valley and Chicago-land area will be envious of. This will generate tax revenue and bring people from all over who otherwise might have never visited Elgin.**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**ANSWER: The best way to improve our downtown area is to correct our zoning. It's not fun for some to talk about zoning, but it's necessary. As I previously stated, as a Commissioner with Planning & Zoning, I have first hand knowledge of how not having areas zoned properly has caused issues with development. For example, retailers and restaurants belong on the same street with street level access and not office spaces or not-for-profits taking up those street level spaces, which otherwise could be used to persuade tax revenue generating**

businesses. When we correct this as a City, we lay a foundation for future downtown success.

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6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**ANSWER: Yes, but only if taxpayers want it.**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**ANSWER: Yes.**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**ANSWER: Yes, through TIF Funds, but only if their value warrants a proper return on investment from the tax payer dollars; and I don't think that can be properly evaluated based on our current agreement. There will need to be some metrics added to this relationship in order to better evaluate the effectiveness of DNA.**

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**ANSWER: I'm estimating \$3-5,000.**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**ANSWER: I'm not totally sure at this point. I will fundraise and evaluate things as I go through the campaign process.**

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**ANSWER: Responsible Bidder and Prevailing Wage laws protect our City against bids that may be cheaper, but not safer and ensures people are paid a livable wage, respectively. The article detailed an instance where the City may have paid more than we should have on a bid because of the requirements of RB & PV, but that's the cost of protecting our workforce. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't figure out other methods. We have to continuously improve and evaluate our cost effectiveness, simultaneously while evaluating other options.**

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**ANSWER: Yes, but only if the property is being used to provide a service that the City desperately needs and saves us on cost in other areas of the City budget that we otherwise would be paying for. In other words, if we don't "break even", we should be gaining value in another area that at least makes up the difference in loss. Essentially, we would indirectly "break even" at a minimum.**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**ANSWER: As I stated earlier, any vacant property that is not safe and doesn't hold strategic value, should be placed on the table for possible selling. I will always be willing to explore the possibility of selling any building or land that isn't currently being used.**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**ANSWER: Yes, but only if the cost of repair and expenses over time, exceeds the gain from the possible sale.**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**ANSWER:** It's a beautiful property that has value, but the City just has not secured the right buyer. If elected, I would be interested in exploring the fixing and leasing of this property, but for it just to sit there is a travesty.

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**ANSWER:** I'm in favor of thinking outside of the box to garner new talent from anywhere, but going forward, I think that the City of Elgin has more than enough talent, being our residents; who are people from very different backgrounds, who can fulfill our workforce demand if provided with the training and opportunities to do so.

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11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**ANSWER:** Absolutely not, but that's relative to the topic. City staff does need to have some say so, but on a project of this magnitude, I would like it to come before the Mayor, City Council and City residents.

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**ANSWER:** Yes.

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**ANSWER:** Absolutely not.

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12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**ANSWER:** I think it's a good idea. I don't like that the city is being asked to contribute funds, but I also understand how the hiring of residents, recycling of dollars and the purchasing of local produce can benefit the city and seems to be the way to go. vs. having only the possibility of negative of reducing revenue at other grocery stores

13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**ANSWER:** If elected, my foremost role on City Council will be to protect the best interest of residents/taxpayers of our City. My role will also include being accessible and transparent during my time as an elected official. My role will always be to make decisions that residents/taxpayers would want me to make on their behalf because it's them that I represent; and remembering that it's because of them that I was elected in the first place. My role will also include being fair to my colleagues, telling them when I think they have it wrong and congratulating them when I believe they have it right. I also see myself as responsible for bringing new ideas and asserting a different perspective.

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**ANSWER:** One of the values I bring is that I'm a problem solver; I don't spend much time thinking about the issue(s), but instead, I figure out and focus on the solution(s). So, If elected, when I disagree with someone or an idea, I'll also provide a solution or an alternative and if I'm unable to at the moment, I will bookmark the discussion and revisit it at a later time with a remedy. Another value I will bring to the City Council is my experience in leadership: I have a Bachelors Degree in Business Management and a Masters Degree in Public Administration with a concentration in government. I'm a graduate of School District U-46's Parent Leadership Institute and the Elgin Area Leadership Academy. I now help facilitate and lead U-46's leadership program. I've been a City Commissioner since 2011, initially with Image Advisory and now with Planning and Zoning. Lastly, I'm also Board President-elect of Greater Elgin Family Care Center. Another value I provide is experience. Although I have never served in an elected office, I decided long ago that I would gain the experience I felt was necessary to become qualified to lead. I actively take on leadership roles in whatever causes I believe in. The value I bring is that of a problem solver, a leader and an experienced community servant who will be ready to hit the ground running on day one.

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14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**ANSWER:** I'm assuming that the question is referring to our Social Service who are not-for-profits. The Income from the Riverboat has undoubtedly been reduced in nature. This is unfortunate, but this is our new reality and the City has to continue to plan accordingly. On top of that, the State of Illinois has not been able to pass a budget, which means cities such as ours have not been provided with our usual funds from the State. This means that we have to make cuts, which means hard decisions. When funds dry up, the first thing usually eliminated is that of not-for-profits/Social Services funds, which are their to support the people who need assistance the most. Elgin is better than that. A community is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable, which is usually the poor and it's Senior Citizens. Although I recognize the ever drying up income from the Riverboat, that alone does not constitute the stoppage of funds to organizations who provide the assistance needed to our communities most vulnerable. In all times, good or bad, we should always seek new revenue streams for the reason of exactly what happened with our Riverboat. I would be open to reducing what we provide/loan, but elimination is not the solution.

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15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**ANSWER:** Just as I stated before about the Chamber and DNA, there is room for improving the City's relationship with the Tourism Bureau. The bottom line with any employer-employee relationship is accountability. If there is not much accountability or none all together, how can you truly judge success? You can't, but that doesn't mean the employee isn't a good employee. It means that the employer has to do a better job in creating criteria by which the employee can be evaluated. In other words, the City has to formulate a set of metrics that can be used to evaluate the success or failure of ETB, DNA and the Chamber. The City would also have to add in more frequent presentation/check in dates to add accountability. Once a year may be lenient, so a model of every 3 months may be more appropriate. Only then can we evaluate the effectiveness of dollars spent.

This is the end of Corey Dixon's questionnaire .....

## The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

### Rich Dunne's Answers

Note: Rich Dunne's answers were not formatted to directly fit into the designed form. While his answers have not been edited in any way for content, his supplied replies have been set by The OCTAVE in bold italic font so the reader can more readily identify his answers. This is of more importance in those subjects which had multiple questions.

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

***The current city policy is different for the two residential zones within the city. These zones were created by city. In the older residential zone of the city, a resident rakes their leaves out to the curb. When they are at the curb they are removed by Public Works Crews. Then Public Works Crews load the leaves into a Public Works truck for transport to the city yard waste contractor for recycling. In newer residential areas of the city the residents have to bag their leaves, then they place their bags at the curb where they are picked up by Waste Management (the city refuse contractor) and transported to the city yard waste contractor for recycling.***

***The costs of the recycling of the leaves are covered by the city in both areas.***

***The difference is that in older areas of the city that city covers the costs of the Public Works Crews for the collecting of the leaves and transporting the leaves to the contractor for recycling.***

***The city charges the residents in the older areas the costs to cover the additional insurance in the curb side collections of the leaves and transport to its contractor for recycling. This charge is placed on the residents' water bill.***

***I believe the heart of this question is whether there is equity for each resident of the city by the current system.***

***During budget hearing when the Council discussed this issue the City Staff stated that they believed the additional charges on the non-rake area covered the city's costs. I asked if the city had Activity Base Costing on these costs.***

***Activity-based costing (ABC) is a costing methodology that identifies activities in an organization and assigns the cost of each activity with resources to all products and services according to the actual consumption by each. This model assigns more indirect costs (overhead) into direct costs compared to conventional costing.***

***Staff stated that internal costs to determine the true ABC for this activity were not within the city means to determine. They stated that city does not have an accounting system to record true costs for the activities of the manpower, equipment and depreciation of its equipment. This lack of accounting ability is an issue that could be addressed but would cost additional manpower and software to attain.***

***Without the ability to generate the true costs the Council approves the budget with the estimated costs. This is at the root cause of many issues within the city's budget do we have the resources to conduct the current operations of the city correctly? If not should we be taking on additional projects before addressing these new projects for the city?***

***I believe that to provide equity to all city residents the city needs to either provide proper accounting of their cost or provide an equal system of leaf removal across the city.***

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

***When I was first elected to the Council, I realized that the best way to address the majority of the city's concerns was thru proper Economic Development. With proper economic development we increase our retail tax base and reducing the tax burden from the residential tax base.***

***At that time the city had just gone through a round of cost saving measures including three rounds of employee layoffs. At this time, the Council looked to establish a contract called a Purchase of Service Agreement (PSA) with the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce (EAC)/Elgin Development Group (EDG). I voted against the first PSA with the Chamber because the contract contained no deliverables. Deliverables in a contract are tasks that the Chamber would provide to the City in return for payment. Without a defined contract with actionable deliverables, I could not support this PSA.***

***After this PSA was proposed, I felt that I needed more information on what would be appropriate items to be place into the PSA when it came up for renewal, therefore I attend the Basic Economic Development Course from the International Economic Development Council through Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville. During this course I learned that many communities have PSAs with their Chambers. I also learned best practices and successful deliverables that can be placed into a PSA to insure that the relationship is mutually beneficial to both the business community and the city.***

***The current PSA with the Chamber has 43 deliverables which cover business recruitment, workforce development, transportation development and enhancing Elgin. I believe this collaborative partnership between local businesses and the city is the best way to secure economic development which benefits all of the citizens of Elgin. Therefore, I support the current Purchase of Service agreement with the Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce (EAC)/Elgin Development Group (EDG).***

***Another tool used by the city in economic development is incentives. Unfortunately, in the current market place that the city competes in for development, incentives have become all too common. In limited situations I support using rebates of collected sales tax as an incentive to attract development. By using sales tax rebates, a business must first develop the income stream that they are receiving a rebate for. This type of incentive makes the city and the development partners in the mutually beneficial growth of the city.***

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3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer:**

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer:**

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer:**

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

***The city does own many properties. Some the city purchased with specific plans for the site such as 707 W. Chicago St which was a video store and now is Fire Station 6. At times it is because the residents would like to have a blighted property removed from their neighborhood. An example of this type of acquisition would be the five buildings of Casa Linda Estate at Willard Ave. and Mackey Ln. Before redevelopment into Prairie Park a community park, this site sat empty for several years while the city pursued grant funding for developing the park. At others times the city acquires properties when owner is under distress and the property fits in to redevelopment plans for an area. Such as a few small residential parcels on State St and Mill St. which the city acquired for payment of the owed taxes. These sites were acquired for potential redevelopment. But while the city awaits the redevelopment the sites have been cleared which at times presents a much improved appearance to the neighbor. The city has also purchased approximately 15 homes on the lower southeast side on Hammond Street. These lots were purchased and the homes were leveled, eventually the streets and utilities will be removed in order to turn this area into wetlands to reduce flooding.***

**However, at times the city has acquired properties without a clear plan or funding for any project. An example of this would be 302 W. Chicago St., The Nancy Kimball House. This property was purchased by the city in 2008 and has sat shuttered for years until the neighborhood reached out to the city with a plan to develop the house into a community center.**

**This set of questions assumes that the city does not have plans for the properties that it owns.**

**While no one master plan exists for all of the city properties, I do not believe it is possible to write one plan to cover all situations. I do believe that for each property the city owns there should be a plan for its use. If the city does not have a plan, need or use, the city should look to divest itself of the property. I don't believe an independent Task Force is necessary in order to accomplish this. The process for selling any city asset is already codified into city ordinance and state statute. It is the responsibility of the Council to make sure that staff follows these approved procedures.**

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4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer:**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer:**

**Transparency is a good thing for our citizens. I believe that placing as much information as possible on to the city's website is one of the most cost efficient way of achieving transparency.**

**The Illinois Policy Institute (IPI), an independent organization generating public policy solutions aimed at promoting personal freedom and prosperity in Illinois. The IPI reviews cities websites and provides ratings based on their transparency. Since December 23, 2013 the IPI has given the city of Elgin their Sunshine Award for scoring 98.70% on a Scale of 100 for online transparency. At the start of my term on the Council, the city received rating of just 28.5% by the IPI. The increase score is a measure of the hard work of both the Council and staff to provide our citizens with information. [www.illinoispolicy.org/illinois-sunshine-award-winners](http://www.illinoispolicy.org/illinois-sunshine-award-winners)**

**When a community receives an award such as the Sunshine Award, it is not the time to become complacent. I know that there is still room for improvement in the city's web site such as more information**

**on taxes. I support the continuing efforts of the city in providing our citizens and guests to the city the best web information possible. At the same time I believe this will help achieve 100% transparency rating from the IPI and Elgin citizens.**

**Below are the 10 points that the IPI uses to rate a city. One of the points is rated for transparency is taxes.**

**10-Point Transparency Checklist 1. Contact information 2. Public meetings 3. Public information**

**4. Budgets 5. Audits 6. Expenditures 7. Compensation 8. Contracts 9. Lobbying 10. Taxes**

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5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer:**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer:**

Question 5c: Do see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer:**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer:**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer:**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer:**

*The improvements to the infrastructure and streetscape that has just been completed by the City of Elgin was started and approved before I was elected onto the Council. I believe that these improvements have positioned the downtown into the best possible stance in order to allow future redevelopment by virtually guaranteeing that no major construction on streets or utilities will need to be conducted downtown in the foreseeable future.*

*The city needs to have a more defined plan for our downtown. I believe that currently we allow the needs of developers to drive our plans for the downtown rather than the city driving the plan. An example of this is 200 Prairie Street. This site had originally been built as a theatre in the 20's. During the start of Elgin's redevelopment, the city*

*incentivized the development of a restaurant and microbrewery at that location. Subsequently the site was subdivided creating a smaller restaurant with a liquor license. After this restaurant opened, the property owner asked the city for a zoning variance to allow a church to be established at this site. The majority of the Council approved this zoning variance. The building was then sold to the church who did not renew the lease to the restaurant. This now leaves Elgin without a restaurant site at that location as a liquor license can no longer be issued due to it's proximity to a church. This has also eliminated an opportunity for the city to earn sales tax revenue. I voted against this variance because it was not in alignment with the stated vision/plans for the downtown neighborhood.*

*The stated vision of the city is to establish the downtown as a residential, business and entertainment district. In this regard, I support a performance pavilion at Festival Park. I believe this should be a partnership between the City of Elgin, Kane County and the Grand Victoria Casino. I feel that as owners of the land, the City of Elgin should have final approval of this project. Either way, for the project to move forward it will need to be approved for both zoning and permits through the city.*

*I am supportive of the redevelopment of the Tower Building to a point. In my opinion the city investment in this project is at the maximum amount that both the TIF District and the city can support. I am concerned about the lack of on site parking for residents and their guests. This is the third major development that the city has approved downtown where we have guaranteed parking spaces to a developer to meet our zoning requirements which subsequently reduces the number of parking spaces available for downtown businesses.*

*The city is going to have to address the Hemmens facility as well as the rest of the Civic Center Complex in the near future. These building were mostly built in 1968. There are many deferred maintenance and*

*Life Safety issues to address. After those issues are dealt with, we then need to develop an open, compressive, long-term plan to cover the river front on both sides from Wing Street to Route 20. Trying to address the downtown or riverfront development in small sections will not work.*

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6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer:**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer:**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer:**

*This question demonstrates why the City Council needs to be flexible at times in their comments to questions. Until this afternoon, I had a response to address this question and then deleted that response. As a member of the City Council, I was notified today, January 17th at 2:39 pm by Deirdre White that she is resigning her position as Executive Director of the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) effective as of January 20th 2017. As a City Councilmember I do not feel it's appropriate to address this question at this time until I have further information.*

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer:**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer:**

*I am planning on spending under the \$2,000.00 cap needed to establish a formal campaign with the Illinois Election Commission. I am not planning on hiring a Professional Campaign Manager. I am planning to keep my costs low by utilizing a grass roots effort to support my campaign. Being a retired Firefighter, I expect that as in the past, I will receive support from some firefighters and their friends. I am hoping to spend no more than \$500.00 of my own funds. I do not expect to receive funds or in-kind donations large enough to run my entire campaign.*

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**Answer:**

*Prevailing Wage law is state statute that the city must follow. It is an unfunded mandate that all communities in the state of Illinois must be in compliance with.*

*Looking back at the historical records of Council actions, the Responsible Bidder Ordinance was passed on 06/10/09 by a vote of 7 to 0. I had been on the City Council about two months at that time. I would have thought that this was also a state statute.*

*I agree with the statement that I made from in the Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015 "(This article was provided to us as part of the OCTAVE materials. "Councilman Rich Dunne suggested performing a test for the next city project by soliciting bids both as a package and as smaller, individual projects to see which elicits the most competitive pricing." The City Manager has not provided the Council an "Objective Test" as I requested "to see which elicits the most competitive pricing." Without an objective test it is impossible to determine which the best process for the city is.*

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**Answer:**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**Answer:**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**Answer:**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**Answer:**

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**Answer:**

*This property was received by the in Resolution O-6 by a vote of 9-0 from the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. This resolution was passed on 11/20/13, "Resolution Authorizing Execution of a Conservation Easement Agreement with Forest Preserve District of Kane County for a Portion of the Former Fox River Country Day School Property (1600 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Illinois)" As a City Council we were excited to receive this land at no cost to the citizens.*

***But one should always look a gift horse in the mouth. The city neglected to do its due diligence on this site before accepting the property and now the cost of maintenance could very well exceed the benefit of the donation of the land and structures. I would be very supportive of leasing or selling the site at a break even cost to the citizens.***

***Additionally, this property was a tax exempt site before the city received it. If the city could return it to the tax rolls during a sale/lease transaction, it would be more of a benefit to the citizens of Elgin.***

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**Answer:**

***I question our Return of Investment (ROI) for such activities. I do not believe that the city was able to demonstrate an adequate ROI for recruitment effort outside the Chicago metropolitan area. If the Police Department or any city department could demonstrate that there were benefits exceeding the cost of recruitment efforts outside of the Chicago metropolitan area, I would consider support these kinds of activities.***

***With the starting rate of pay we offer within the city, I believe that there are more than enough potential recruits available within the city, if not the metropolitan Chicago area.***

11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer:**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer:**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer:**

***There is a process that has been established before I was on the City Council to appeal for a variance of the city's Zoning Ordinances. I would be interested in have the Council review this process to assure that our citizens had adequate input to the process. I know this is one the most regulated area of city government to assure that the rights of all property owners are protected.***

12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer:**

***At this time Shared Harvest is marketing itself as a "For Profit" business. I do not see how the Council could not treat them as other "For Profit" business without putting the city at risk of future litigation. Unless Shared Harvest presents a truly different business plan from a For Profit" business I do not see how I support more than sales tax rebates as an incentive for them to be established in the city.***

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13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer:**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer:**

***These are the responsibilities of the City Council as I see them:***

***To set policy for the city.***

***To review and approve the budget for the city.***

***To review and approve all expenditures of the city.***

***To review the performance of the Councils only employee the City Manager***

***To assure that the Manager and staff follow the policies set by the Council.***

***The unique value I bring to the Council is that I have lived in the city for 30 years and have been active in all layers of the city. I raised my family here in the city including three daughters. I have helped to **The** establish a Neighborhood Association and was their first President. I have been a board member and past President of a non-for-profit. I have been a member of school parent associations and sat on committees to expand one of the oldest schools in the city. I have served on city commissions. I have worked both as an employee and senior staff member of the city. I have served the city as a Council member and most importantly I have been a taxpayer to the city for all of these years.***

***I bring this experience to the City Council and true love for the city and a commitment to all of our citizens, with the desire to see all of us better our lives here in the city of Elgin.***

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14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer:**

***I am supportive of using Riverboat Funds to help the "not-for-profit" organizations within the city that aide Elgin citizens and therefore reduce our operating costs to provide additional services. This is especially important when many not -for-profits can provide their services at a cost lower than the city would be able to. An example of this a not-for-profit that provides after school recreation and supervision to at risk youth of the city, such is the Boys and Girls Club. Our funding of the Club has helped to reduce the juvenile crime within the city.***

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15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer:**

***I have been supportive of the work that the Elgin Tourism Bureau does for the city. However, I am concerned that the Bureau might be losing focus on its primary mission; to represent the needs of the city of Elgin. In looking at their web site and marketing materials they now call themselves the "Northern Fox River Valley Communities, Elgin Area Convention & Visitors Bureau". I understand the Bureau receives greater funding from the state by representing more communities; however when they begin to represent eight other communities with such small staff, the Bureau could be losing focus. The total populations of these other eight communities is greater than the population of the city of Elgin, yet the city of Elgin still pays the lion's share of the Bureau's costs. I do not believe that we are receiving the lion's share of the work nor do I feel it is a good return on our investment.***

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This is the end of Rich Dunne's questionnaire.....

## The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire Terry Gavin's Answers

Note: Terry Gavin's answers were not formatted to directly fit into the designed form. While his answers have not been edited in any way for content, his supplied replies have been set by The OCTVE in bold italic font so the reader can more readily identify his answers. This is of more importance in those subjects which had multiple questions.

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

***Answer: My view is that the current policy is expensive but based on what history on this tells us most people want this service to continue. I feel that at some point not too far off in the future the city will have to discontinue the "rake out" part of the program. While some citizens have told me they support this idea & that we should encourage people to mulch their leaves, which is a great idea, it may not fully answer the cost issue. While we would save money on the equipment which we now use by not having to replace it as well as savings on fuel labor costs would remain mostly static. The reason is that the people in Public Works who do this seasonally would simply be shifted to other necessary jobs such as street & pot hole repair instead of leaf collection. While they are doing the leaf collecting other tasks are left undone.***

***Waste Management handles the bag pickup portion of the program & charges the city a fee to cover this which is then "passed on through" to citizens by cost of stickers. We do not try to make money off the stickers but to only cover that portion of the cost WM charges us to pick up the bags & take them away.***

***Obviously that leaves us with mulching which many people including myself does now. In my discussing eliminating the rake out part of current policy with our past city manager I was told "his experience with that issue has been explored & when moved to final approval with past councils the public outcry caused the elected officials to back down". I personally have not experienced this in my nearly 8 years of service but believe it is true. With many "services" that local government supplies people say they want them but paying for them sometimes becomes a problem.***

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

***Answer: This is a favorite issue of mine. Since being sworn in again in 2013 my 1<sup>st</sup> priority was to focus on our local economy aka economic development. As you analyze the results over the last 4 years or even the last 2 years it is obvious that we've been extremely successful.***

***In general, the method we're utilizing is a hybrid model of private (EDG-Economic Development Group) with public (City of Elgin) partnership. My view based on experience & common sense is that we succeed best when all parties work together towards a common goal. We can disagree at times on tactics or pathways but if we have a common goal teamwork will insure victory.***

***The simple truth after working with both groups public & private I've discovered is they are not mutually exclusive they are united for success. Some investors/developers want to speak to local government (public) 1<sup>st</sup> while others want to talk to private (local Chamber of Commerce aka EDG). It requires a team approach which has worked with outstanding results.***

***The prior method utilized was that the city did economic development "in house" which was discontinued in 2010. Recently data released by city staff & city manager's office clearly show we spent more money doing it in house then what we're spending today but results are much better. The last year the city used that model the cost was about \$500,000 per year while our current contract with the EDG runs about \$275,000. The list of new businesses is rather lengthy & would take a large amount of space here to provide. Just a couple newly attracted major corporations/companies include Motorola, Subaru, Russo Power, Volkswagen, Farm & Fleet. Also high tech manufacturers retained with expanded plants MultiFilm Packing & Compass Automation who were offered better deals from other local governments but choose to stay here.***

***Anybody who's studied how to finance local government operations while holding the line on taxes knows what I'm going to say. Economic development based largely on commercial investment by the private sector is the only way to pay for increasing labor costs built into all municipalities the size of Elgin or reducing core services or raising taxes is the result.***

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3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer:**

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer:**

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer:**

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**Answer:**

***While no formal strategic plan is in place I'm not sure having one is needed or truly useful. For instance, most city property is being utilized for a public purpose & that need remains. Vacant properties cover many different situations from small residential lots created when a dilapidated home in a flood plain that's unoccupied is purchased demolished to help create a buffer of open land since building codes/zoning won't allow new construction there. So there's no standard piece of property profile that allows a strategic plan to be used. There's also a cost in time to draw up any strategic plan in staff hours which means dollars.***

***As for creating a so called Task Force to study the need for a strategic plan I say sure why not. The Mayor is often in favor of such committees to study different issues. No harm involving citizens in the discussion. I always favor asking the community for input.***

***Another type of property the city acquires is usually in the Central Business District when no private investors want to purchase an old vacant crumbling commercial or business building. An example of this would be the former Moose Building on State St., the condition of the building got so bad no developer was interested so we acquired it as with other similar parcels/buildings in that corridor to demolish & offer for commercial development. So there's a strategic plan there but it is only useful in certain situations.***

***It has only been in the last 3 years the city created the inventory list of properties & for that I am glad. I sat in meetings with another council person who pushed City Manager Stegall for this to be completed after some delays. There's a large inventory because it includes all public buildings & public parks so there are many parcels in total.***

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4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer:**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer:**

*Over the last 4 budget cycles I've been part of there's been an effort to post "true tax" figures before a vote to approve is taken. Some costs like sticker fees don't apply to every citizen/taxpayer so hard to calculate that. Liquor tax passed in 2012 before I got back on the council is largely on the business or bar/restaurant which may or may not get passed on to the customer.*

*So all in all some of the items mentioned could be easily identified & some not. When the idea of revenue diversification was 1<sup>st</sup> announced it sounded like a good idea to rely less on property taxes for day to day city operational costs. It did what it was intended to do plus after the State of Illinois stopped passing budgets 2 years ago the revenue from this kept us above water with regards to millions of dollars of revenues that was held back by them for nearly 4 months.*

*There are still issues to watch for coming from the State in new laws taking back some of the revenues we've counted on for years.*

*If more citizens were asking for that kind of data over 10 years then it might not be a bad thing to go back & look at but truly have only heard a couple ever mention that to me. Again any comprehensive report compiled for citizen review will require staff time & costs to produce. So at this point I would not support it. Virtually every tax mentioned is noted on a person's utility bill, sales tax receipt, water bill so if a person is so interested in finding it they can. I reject the idea that we're trying to hide anything.*

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5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer:**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer:**

Question 5c: Do see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer:**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer:**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer:**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer:**

*So many questions so little time. The city's efforts on revitalizing the downtown goes back at least 40 years. While I served my 1<sup>st</sup> & only other term on the council in the mid to late 1990's I've seen 20 years & the improvements have made the downtown more appealing to investors thus more successful. The question is, was it worth it & I'd say it's very hard to tell for sure but not doing it would have guaranteed failure. Almost all the monies spent on the Central Business Dist. Was from Riverboat proceeds or State grants & tax credits.*

*I strongly supported the TIF financing, along with Historic tax credits for the Tower Building rehab for many reasons. The building has not been maintained in well over 30-35 years during this period it sustained more & more decay. When 1<sup>st</sup> presented to the city council as a proposal to rehab building into market rate apartments at a cost of TIF funds totaling \$4.7 million the vote was 9-0.*

*After several months, multiple frivolous lawsuits, increased construction costs, including large pieces (some weighing nearly 50 lbs.) of stone falling from the exterior of the structure. The developer with investors & the bank making a \$10 million loan we were approached with a take it or leave it last ditch agreement requiring an additional \$1.7 million of TIF funds to complete the project.*

*Many meetings took place with council members & staff who worked throughout the weekend preceding the final offer. As I viewed it the facts gave us 3 choices, the one before us with Capstone Inc., second we would have to spend \$600,000 of taxpayer money on the exterior problem of large chunks of limestone falling down to the streets below with boarding up building to wait for another investor to appear after years of nothing.*

*The third option we looked at was purchasing the building & demolishing it at a cost of over \$2 million with nothing left but a small, empty downtown lot. Truly these were the only realistic options we faced, so in my opinion the best choice had to be to increase the TIF funding which is a tool used in redeveloping blighted areas within local communities. If not spending those funds on the most iconic, historic building in our city what else would warrant it? A tough vote but one that had to be made, save the building to bring between 50-65 new market rate paying young tenets into our downtown or an empty dark, deserted 14 story landmark further decaying.*

*A performance pavilion or a band shell sounds like a good idea if somehow money or grants could be found to help pay for it. This idea has been given serious consideration but at the end there's no money available to us at City Hall to cover the millions of dollars it would take to build. Overall Festival Park is being used & has had upgrades or replacement of worn out equipment. The city can't & shouldn't spearhead any further upgrades to it while we have the Sports Complex open property to upgrade.*

*I view the Hemmens as already adding to the revitalization of the downtown. It is booked almost to capacity for what it can hold now the question is do we modernize it or expand it. That is a question that has been discussed over the 3.5 years I've been on the council. Again the question becomes paying for any major expansion, we have modernized & upgraded the equipment inside from lighting to sound systems that were badly needed. We're also spending a couple million dollars on complete repair of the civic center concrete. Everything has a price tag easy to say yes until the question becomes how do you pay for it.*

*I view the current strategy of improving the city's central business district as the right course with the Tower Building being the linchpin for future success.*

---

6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer:**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer:**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer:**

*I believe the DNA has earned the money we've contracted with them to do the job of marketing our downtown. While running as a challenger in 2013 I was unsure of the value of their services. I met with the past executive director & over the last 4 years met with the current Ex. Director along with board members.*

*The Purchase of Services contract we have with DNA (same PSA with ELGIN Development Group) requires many "deliverables" to be met every year or the agreement can be terminated. Working with as well as watching closely what this organization & it's many volunteers are accomplishing under difficult conditions convinces me we are better off letting them do this rather than bringing it back in house. Before DNA took over the role of downtown promotion & marketing the city did it at a higher cost.*

*As for the SSA my position has been consistent that if the property owners in the Central Business District support a line item added on their property tax bill then I will support it if not then I won't support it. This city council ended a 40 year SSA on the Spring St. parking deck in 2016 which was a tax cut to those property owners.*

*I do believe that use of TIF for funding the operations of DNA is the best current arrangement but always open for review annually.*

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer:**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer:**

*I'm not really sure I want to answer this but as with my experiences in past races especially my comeback victory in 2013, money is secondary to having a strong consistent message. My campaign budget is set for between \$4,000 & \$5,000.*

*As for how much of that money will be mine again hard to say but have partially covered my previous campaign expenses so am doing that now 100%. Some promises of support have come in but again money is secondary to having a winning message based on facts & common sense. Donations are now coming in with more pledged.*

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**Answer:**

*This is another lengthy issue which I dived into when finding out from staff that all city contracts above \$50,000 had to go to only contractors who participated in U.S. Dept. approved apprenticeship programs. This effectively meant all work the City of Elgin contracted out had to basically go to union only contractors even at the smaller dollar amounts. When I asked for an estimate of costs to the tax payer for this condition was told it could be as much as \$1 million annually.*

*This of course got my attention so I went to Legal Dept. to find out the history of that clause referencing "apprenticeship programs" on contractors doing work for the city. It was added to the Responsible Bidder Ordinance in the year 2011 by a unanimous vote of the city council of 7-0. This vote was taken with a staff recommendation to not approve it because it would cost the taxpayers more money for work done.*

*So I suggested at a council meeting we take a look at that cost & discuss if that's what the council wanted continue doing. Seems to me that my suggestion for staff to look at compiling data on costs was the right thing to do & eventually the council agreed. After a couple months City Mgr. Stegall stated that no accurate figures were available because non-union contractors would not bother doing a cost estimate for us on a project they could not win. So with only one other supportive council person Councilman Shaw to back me on this with the rest of the council opposed I did what only made sense & that was drop it as an issue.*

*"Prevailing wage" laws have been of interest to me for over 20 years from my 1<sup>st</sup> term on the city council. They are set by the Illinois Labor Board under Federal guidelines also generally referred to as Davis Bacon Act. Once a year local governments like the City of Elgin are asked to approve the IL. Labor of Dept. figures for work performed within its control. You either approve it or pass your own chart of "Prevailing Wages" which has been attempted by local governments in the past, the State of IL. takes you to court to file a lawsuit. It is an unfunded mandate & I believe local governments have the right if they choose to set their own chart on this matter. Since it is not wise to incur the legal action to fight it we adopt it & I have voted for it many times with comments.*

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**Answer:**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**Answer:**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**Answer:**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**Answer:**

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**Answer:**

*I have taken a proactive approach with this property since I got back on the city council. The city acquired this land from the Illinois Tollway Authority at no cost. Both buildings as well as land, sounds like a great deal but as with most things there's a hidden price tag with this.*

***The city has issued two RFP's with little or no interest with the exception of a group of Elgin citizens interested in making the property into a charter school. While I fully support the idea of charter, private school options this group did not have the financial support to cover the cost of the buildings. So I opposed it based on costs. No other serious offers have been received largely due to the fact that there are covenant's attached to the land that makes it extremely difficult to make this into a private sector profit center.***

***Since then I & other council members have been contacted by a group led by a Chinese businessman to possibly purchase or lease the land as a private school. Once again the offer was not financially good enough to make us want to accept. That group has seemed to have lost interest & moved on.***

***We now have another group made up of the same citizens who tried the charter school but with more support now along with more money. My view has been & continues to be that the city needs to find someone to lease and/or buy the property to allow it to serve best use to the Elgin community. The buildings are secured & stabilized with no big expense at this time but the clock does continue to tick so closing a deal on this is important. This property has value so we should proceed carefully but keeping it is not in my view the best use.***

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**Answer:**

***I did not & do not support trips like this outside the American mainland to recruit candidates for employment with the city. While intentions may have been good it does not make sense to me on many levels.***

***I do not believe we will be doing this again in the future. With the advent of online testing the need to do recruiting trips is not needed any longer.***

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11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer:**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer:**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer:**

*I see like 4 questions contained in just this one issue as are most of the others before this one. I opposed this project primarily because the surrounding neighborhood spoke out against it. Plain & simple my view is that job #1 as a city councilman elected at large is to represent the people in each & every neighborhood.*

*I sat down with the Housing Authority along with their architects, we examined the plans, the designs, parking concerns & neighbor's questions but when all was said it passed on a split vote.*

*Now that we look at the finished product it appears they were well built new units adding value to the tenets who live there. The process was flawed but in the end a full hearing before the public was held & the majority voted it through.*

---

12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer:**

*My view of the "Shared Harvest" is simply a great idea but why would we be asked to help finance it? The business model sounds solid but we should not just grant money to any start up business & we no longer do that. A loan is a possibility but that means it would most likely be an unsecured loan so a bit of a gamble there.*

*I hope this project gets to the level of support that was mentioned from the beginning of 1,000 shareholders, believe that is the correct number, so then their investors will step up & make this happen.*

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13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer:**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer:**

*My roll first & foremost is to represent the people of Elgin in the best capacity possible. I have felt this way since day 1 in my 1<sup>st</sup> term in 1995 & feel the same today in my 2<sup>nd</sup> term.*

*My primary skill set that brings value to this council is that I believe in customer service as a public official, I also feel my job requires problem solving with ideas to present to my fellow council members & staff to make thing better in our city. Also to focus on core services & keeping costs down while maintaining high value.*

*My lengthy background in finance & insurance with experience as a successful businessman help bring that attitude to our city government. I also spent several years in management & training of new employees who would become leaders themselves.*

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14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer:**

*Another difficult question with no easy answers. Yes, Riverboat revenues are bottoming out & will never ever rise up to previous levels. So we know & understand that. We have stopped funding those organizations from all sources.*

*Whether or not we fund "not-for-profits" at all should be the question. I believe we should make every effort to assist those agencies dealing with human services. If we as a community of over 110,000 cannot find the will or the way to help our most vulnerable citizens at a real time of need I say shame on us.*

*The real question as I see it is should we go back or at least partially go back & reprogram CDBG funds from HUD to the not-for-profit agencies instead of just city capital projects in low income areas. That is a policy decision decided by the city council & I plan on bringing it back up again. I see some of our agencies are hurting thanks in large part to a State government that can't seem to pass an annual budget.*

***This is a complicated issue like many others & requires deliberation with common sense but also decisive leadership is required. If we do not respond to the needs of those most in need with human services, we will have to pay the price of paying for dealing with them afterwards. Hope that is clear if not ask me & I will explain.***

15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer:**

***At first I did not have a view other then what people had told me. After sitting down with the Executive Director & her assistant it became very obvious to me they are completely focused on bringing people to Elgin as tourists/visitors.***

***The monies they receive come from a Hotel/Motel tax paid by every renter. The State of IL. Through the tourism bureau matches the local funds by up to \$200,000. If the city cuts of all funding the state grant goes too. We get more mileage with promotion, advertising working with this public/private partnership then trying to do it in house or not do it at all.***

***Comments are made that the majority of funding comes from Elgin, which is true but then you realize we have the vast majority of the hotels/motels within our corporate boundaries so of course the bulk of the funding comes from where they are collected. I would have no problem as suggested by Mayor Kaptain to rename it the Elgin Visitors & Convention Bureau. They are already working on a new weekend event our 1<sup>st</sup> ever Civil War re-enactment planned for June 2017.***

***There are multiple tourism bureaus throughout the state & they are set up very similarly to ours here. Even though the State of IL. Government can't seem to agree on anything they overwhelming support the tourism industry as an economic driver & so do I.***

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This is the end of Terry Gavin's questionnaire.....

## The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire John Prigge's Answers

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

**Answer:** The leaf collection program, while very popular for those who receive collection without bagging, is patently unfair. In 2015, I was the only councilmember to propose a list of 11 cuts and/or reductions to ease or eliminate the sting of that year's tax hike, which averaged out to \$125 per property tax bill. Cutting leaf collection and asking citizens to treat their leaves like grass clippings in order to save nearly a half-million dollars was on that list. All the other council members, all eight of them, ran away from that topic. I was willing to compromise, to a degree, by reducing the amount of days leaf collection would have been available.

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

**Answer:** The arrangement we have now is a complete failure and provides the worst Return on Investment (ROI) of any contractor we use. Giving away \$275,000 and free office rent at a value of \$135,000 per year, every year, are figures that illustrate the poor value taxpayers receive. I remain the only councilmember who believes that bringing businesses and jobs to Elgin is important enough to be our fourth core service—after police, public works and fire services. We need to take this vital task back in-house and hire a minimum of two professional economic development directors to ward off the upgraded competition we face from our neighboring communities, communities that see our dismal annual results. We need more feet on the street and less in subcommittee meetings, which distract from the real need of our city—more quality jobs.

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3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer:** I would be open to it. I pursued this topic in 2015 and obtained a list of all properties owned by the city. It's lengthy and contains parcels that range from slivers of un-sellable land to large lots. I was advised by then-City Manager Sean Stegall that there was not enough council support to pursue the potential of selling city land on the open market. Case in point: just recently, our back-door deal on two downtown parking lots on Center Street.

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer:** Yes

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer:** Yes

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**Answer:** I believe there are good reasons for the city to hold and maintain certain key pieces of property, primarily if there is reasonable and appropriate upside for potential development.

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4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer:** Yes

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer: Yes**

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5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer: I believe taxpayers are tired of continuously spending money on downtown. Many of them have said that they have done more than their fair share. Until the city's demographics change, I am less likely to spend any more money for aesthetics and cultural enhancements.**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer: I voted to support the initial disbursement of \$4.7 million of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) money in September, 2014. However, when the developer returned just 18 months later asking for an additional \$1.65 million, I said, "No, that's enough," then voted "No" for the second handout of TIF money. The Tower Building project is important to Elgin, but not past the initial \$4.7 million.**

Question 5c: Do you see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer: No. But that doesn't mean I would oppose the building of a performance pavilion, as long as the necessary funding doesn't end up in the lap of Elgin taxpayers. Currently, however, I just don't think it's an "important component in revitalizing downtown," as the question was asked.**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer: Yes. For the right project, with short-term and long-term benefits. I would favor a partnership with the Grand Victoria Casino on any significant upgrade efforts.**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer: As things stand, it currently does not fit my vision at all. In 2015, the Hemmens Task Force presented options that, judging by the lack of interest from the city council, will not happen anytime soon, if ever.**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer: React promptly to requests from the open market for services and provide alternatives to some of our code requirements, i.e. sprinkler requirements in some standalone buildings.**

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6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: No**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: No**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer: For now, yes. But city funding must always be subject to "deliverables," meaning we pay only for what we're getting, not for what we've been promised.**

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer: Less than \$3000.00**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer: Most of it.**

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

Answer: Answer: Per the attached article, I am interested in raising the minimum from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for projects that require outside contractors. I am also willing to look at splitting large jobs into smaller bids, thus opening additional opportunities for smaller contractors to bid on city work.

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

Answer: **No**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

Answer: **Not at the present time.**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

Answer: **Not at the present time.**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

Answer: **Not at the present time.**

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

Answer: **This particular property has potential I do not want to give up on until we are in a position to seek professional proposals for it. My thoughts include an entrance-fee based study/learning center or nature center, corporate retreat or day camp for school children in 6th grade. We have not explored these possibilities. If this land is going to be rented, it must be at market rate. We are hamstrung by covenants on this land that prevent many popular uses. I also would consider exploring the possibility of zoning this property for single-family residential use.**

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

Answer: **It was an absolutely unnecessary waste of taxpayer dollars. The trip to Puerto Rico was a costly pacifier for several members on the city council who believe that diversity cannot be achieved locally. It was a sad day indeed when we left our shores to go to the Caribbean looking for employee candidates for one this Midwest's best police departments. I further object to our recent trips out of state for recruiting efforts.**

---

11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer: No**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer: Yes**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer: Not overlook, but show commensurate flexibility between the city and owners.**

---

12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer: It would be unfair to comment in-depth until I see an official proposal from this organization.**

---

13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer: To close loopholes, ask questions no one else would dare to, seek and recognize truth and transparency and seek value for our taxpayers. To be their advocate, the taxpayers' advocate. Also, to protect the interests of taxpayers from the now all-too-frequent violations of the public's trust from the council majority.**

**I may be only one voice on the city council, but mine is a strong voice. It's a voice of dissent from the recurring rubber stamp of city council decisions. Open and unfettered discussion promotes better thinking and decisions, particularly important when it comes to government policies, local or otherwise. I refuse to knuckle under to the council majority's rule of never compromising on issues, spending and otherwise, as well as their rushing special-interest items to a vote.**

**As long as I'm in office, I'll continue to speak out for Elgin taxpayers.**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer: My values are now more unique than ever, as now I am the only conservative-minded councilmember serving today. My communication skills are unmatched in social media and in citizen engagement. My average time spent on city council business is up to 32 hours per week, which is unmatched by anyone else on the city council, I'm sure. I also bring the burning desire for fairness in the treatment of our citizens and a conscience rooted in what's best for Elgin.**

---

14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer: We are currently not funding NFP's with riverboat money. Should that resume, I will renew my stance as the only councilmember who will seek an overhaul of our not-for-profit funding practices. My first goal is to suggest the Grand Victoria Casino distribute their own funds to take the politics out of this practice. If that's not possible, I will renew my efforts to remove all elected city council members from the process. Our track record of blatant favoritism in this endeavor is well-established and is causing problems with other NFP's. If that is not accomplished, I would lobby to have a distribution based on annual budgets, results and amounts of fundraising done and what other local government agencies also fund them.**

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15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer: I have been investigating the Elgin Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for months and have concluded that we are absolutely not receiving anywhere near a fair return on investment. The more than \$200,000 in yearly tax dollar**

**allocation needs to stop immediately. Elgin is not the tourist destination once hoped for when the riverboat was launched. This function at some level should be part of economic development, with our own professionals and not contracted out.**

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This is the end of John Prigge's questionnaire.....

# The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

## Carol Rauschenberger's Answers

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

**Answer: I believe that as we need to consider a long-term view with the need to cut some expenses. We should be looking at more cost-effective ways to manage our yard waste. There is not only a cost to citizens but an environmental cost in equipment, fuel and wear and tear on our streets in our current policy for leaf/yard waste collection.**

**First, we need to encourage education at the household level regarding practices for mowing, raking and composting. Secondly, we should consider the least costly alternative, which may support pushing some of the costs and work back to the homeowners. Finally, the city should research longer term solutions to the bigger problem of waste such the use of technology, for example, biogas.**

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

**Answer: Before I was on council, the city and the Chamber of Commerce developed a third organization, primarily funded by the city, call EDG (Elgin Economic Development Group) When I was first on council, I felt it was a working organization but not a strategic one. The EDG has recently hired staff that has broader expertise in the local and global economic development. It now has a more strategic focus on the needs of businesses and types of industries we hope to attract. Elgin has a number of attributes that make it a good location now and in the future for business – but we need to continue to monitor business needs and how to sustain and attract businesses. I would like to take the next year to look at the structure of EDG especially in view of current city staffing. Previously, our current city manager took on my economic development duties as a assistant manager. At this moment in time, no one is taking on city staff is focusing on those important duties.**

---

3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer: Yes**

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer: A guideline might be the most appropriate approach.**

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer: A temporary task force would be a cost effective way to consider this task; especially in view of the need to support a lean city staff.**

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**Answer:**

**No**

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4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer: This is an excellent suggestion and easy to do. I think it would be good information for all citizens.**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer: Tax policy is a complex component of our local, state and national governments and not easily evaluated as part of a bigger picture. Perhaps, looking back 5 years and presenting local city taxes and well as increasing city costs could be informative.**

5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer: Elgin is fortunate to have an historic downtown. It has a sense of "place," is compact and walkable. It is to our benefit to invest in this "built" environment for several reasons. The downtown is an area ripe to create more density for living. Developing in the downtown rather than the city edge, makes use of buildings that are already built but underutilized and there is no need to extend city services (they are in place). This is a development mindset that I feel is appropriate for Elgin as a city. In addition, downtown has the opportunity to be a "destination," but it needs a well-designed strategic plan to do so.**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer: Though this was an expensive investment for the city, I believe it was one that had to be made to not only save a beautiful historic building but to "jump start" our downtown as a vibrant and walkable community with access to great downtown amenities like the library, the Centre, bike trail and train to Chicago.**

Question 5c: Do you see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer: No answer supplied.....**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer: No**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer: I would prioritize updating the Hemmens before supporting the Festival Park venue. Taking the Paramount in Aurora as an example, they have increased the value of their downtown by providing more world class entertainment through their theatre venue.**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer: The city of Elgin needs to focus some development efforts in the downtown, not all on the city edge. This is a policy decision. Let's try to attract more housing developers as well as a plan to recruit small retail to support a vibrant downtown targeted at active retirees and millennials.**

6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: The general consensus of building owners did not support an SSA and therefore I would not support it as it is currently being discussed**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: No, not entirely as it can be seen as a conflict of interest.**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer: I think a different formula for funding the DNA should be discussed with downtown building owners, business owners and the city.**

7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer: I hope to spend less than \$3000.00 as I spent just over \$3000.00 in my last campaign.**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer: At this moment, I estimate that half of the money will be my own.**

8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**Answer: The Prevailing Wage is a state law and mandate. As I was quoted in the attached article, there have been several bids that the city could have divided up among several smaller bids so that , so that hopefully smaller ( Elgin) companies could participate. Though the management of more and smaller bids could be problematic, it could be offset by better pricing. This is not a solution for all bids, but can be tried with some types of bids such as , roofing, carpeting.**

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**Answer: I suggest that this is not a simple "yes or no" question as the city council would need to understand who was using the property and why. But if a lessee is willing to rent it for an adequate purpose and maintain the property, I would be happy if the city broke even.**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**Answer: I do not think this is the best way to raise money for the city. I am sure the city would consider selling if it was an appropriate use and price.**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**Answer: The city has minimally maintained the property at a low cost.**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**Answer: Again, it is a valuable property and the right use and price would make a difference.**

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**Answer: I am disappointed that the "charter school" that was proposed last year was not able to make use of the property. I feel that would have stabilized it's use and value. The disposition of this property will now come under the purview of the new council and new city manager. A positive plan needs to be put in place, to at least maintain land and the buildings that are there.**

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**Answer: A flight to Puerto Rico is no more expensive than a flight to New York or California and maybe cheaper than to some other locations. I support the recruitment of city staff that represents the diversity of our city. I supported that strategy now and if the police or fire departments think it is still a viable strategy, I would support it again.**

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11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer: I support the idea of public input on location and design for public housing.**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer: The density and location of public housing should be discussed on a case by case basis as there are many factors involved including type of housing, age of recipients etc.**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer: No.**

12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer: As a point of clarification, I am one of the founding members of Shared Harvest and I still remain involved. Shared Harvest is an Illinois corporation that is selling shares under cooperative law. That means that no one can own more than 10 shares and it is a democratically run business. By creating a small grocery store open to the public, the mission of this business is to provide more local and fresh food sources to the people of Elgin, support local farmers and food producers and to help invigorate the local economy in downtown Elgin. A business owned by Elginites, run by Elginites and supported by Elginites can only be a good move for Elgin and our local farm families and food entrepreneurs. I would recuse myself from a vote on this matter as a council person.**

13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer: I have represented the council on the DNA economic development committee and remain vigilant about housing issues (I have recently been named to the HOME Commission) and sustainability practices (I have requested a city wide sustainability program by department).**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer: My vision of working towards a sustainable, diverse, unique, vibrant community sets me apart from the other candidates. I also bring a unique perspective as a working mother with a professional and business background. I have prior experience in local government, budgeting and planning and policy making. I have a record of civic involvement and spent years volunteering in a variety of organizations in Elgin and other communities. I have living experience in a variety of places, from the island of Manhattan to the island of Saipan, which gives me an expansive view of municipal problems and opportunities. I am a team player and can work well with my colleagues on the council and with the Elgin City staff.**

14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer: This is a complicated issue that I see from various viewpoints – as a previous township trustee, a city council person, and from a state/county policy perspective. First let me say that the Council needs to respect that the Riverboat was set up with the promise of supporting Elgin area non-for-profits. Secondly, I feel we need to re-look at the way we are presently providing support to these organizations through a loan program and not CDBG funds. Third, I would like to see a change in the funding from the state to a county level, working with our local state representatives regarding such legislation.**

15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer: I was on the city council for some time before I was aware there was an Elgin Convention and Tourism Bureau. They exist through a state program of matching funds. As it currently exists, I have not seen proof of adequate return on our matching investment for various reasons. The council needs to look closely at this organization as we approach the next budget where we will be squeezed by pension needs.**

This is the end of Carol Rauschenberger's questionnaire.....

## **The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire Brenda Rodgers' Answers**

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

**Answer: The residents do pay for a portion of their leaf pick-up and looking at the budget the city refuse revenue is over \$5,000,000.00. I happen to live in an area where the residents do both.**

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

**Answer: The city currently contracts with The Elgin Development Group to seek businesses to relocate into the city, this saves the city money as oppose to hiring someone for Economic Development. I attended the council meeting when EDG did their presentation to the council. They spoke about their efforts of bringing businesses to our community last year and filling some empty buildings in our community. This created jobs and sales taxes to the city.**

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3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer: Since real estate value changes the city should create a plan, which should include having a market analysis done (at no cost to the taxpayers) every three years, on its properties by a realtor. This would not create a cost to the residents and the city would know the value of its properties in case they wanted to sell them.**

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer: Every property is different; therefore to have a plan for all properties to be sold the same way may not fit every property. But to have a process for knowing the value would work for all properties.**

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer: I do not think a task force is necessary at this time. As stated above every property is different and knowing the value of the properties is crucial for the residents.**

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**Answer: I think the residents should know what the city owns and the value of the properties.**

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4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer: Transparency should be a vital part of the city of Elgin in all areas. The proposed budget shows the total of the General Funds taxes in percentage, but there should be figures showing the average tax collected from a taxpayer on the site for the residents.**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer: I would like to see the city meet with the residents and explain that information and going forward posting the information.**

---

5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer: Since the heart of a city is it's downtown I believe we should continue to revitalize it. As I eat at the various restaurants downtown I see more and more people eating out and walking downtown. I believe a vibrant downtown will also help to attract major corporations to our community.**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer: I believe this is an investment in our downtown and by investing in this location it will bring 40 plus people to our community who will contribute to the economy and hopefully bring other people to our community.**

Question 5c: Do see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer: By adding a pavilion park in our community this will hopefully add more foot traffic to the area and in turn, they will stay and eat in the community after performances, which will hopefully add jobs and sales tax revenue.**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer: The city should definitely be a part of any plans.**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer: As we continue to grow it is important that we continue to offer a variety of entertainment to our residents.**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer: I believe the improvements that were done were an enhancement to the area and the continued development will bring more bodies, sales tax and employment to our community. We need to continue to invest in our downtown and bring business to the area.**

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6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA.

Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: If 51% of the property owners agree to the SSA then I would support it. If they did not agree I would work with DNA just as I did in the past to find ways to raise money. One of my suggestions would be a food truck event and some of the proceeds go to DNA from the event.**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: Since the city has been supporting DNA from this fund, I would continue to support it. Our resident enjoys the events that DNA bring to our community and the events draw people into our community. These events are a part of attracting people to our community who might not have otherwise visited. I would also work with DNA on new ways to generate funding for them.**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer: We are the 8th largest city in the state and in order to attract people, companies and visitors we must offer events for everyone. This includes young, older, families and single people.**

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer: Not certain**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer: Not certain**

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**Answer: Due to the State Prevailing wage law, the city must accept contracts that match local union wages. The prevailing wage law allows them to hopefully pay their employees a living wage and I support paying employees a living wage.**

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**Answer: I would have to know more about the organization. How long would the lease be for? Why there would not be a profit? More information would be needed.**

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Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**Answer: It would depend on the amount of the sale and the use that the potential purchaser would want to use it for.**

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Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**Answer: The location of the property is attractive, so therefore I would like to make sure we are getting best use for it and the highest price for the residents.**

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Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**Answer: The property being placed, on the tax roll, would be attractive. My first choice would be a company that would place it back on the tax roll.**

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Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**Answer: The location is desirable and I would like to see it placed back on the tax roll.**

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**Answer: We are located near a large Metropolitan city and I would like to make sure we have exhausted local efforts which would include traveling to neighboring states closer before we take our search other places.**

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11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that it's appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing

project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer: Before the plans are presented to the council the city staff sees it first and they are experts in their field as well as familiar with the codes and zoning requirements.**

**Reading the newspaper articles Mr. Duncan did hold 6 community meetings. I also read that the development gave a retired nurse who was living in a studio apartment for eleven years an opportunity to upgrade to a one-bedroom apartment.**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer: I had an opportunity to visit the 55 and older housing development and I like the fact that we were able to give quality housing to our seniors.**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer: The city shouldn't overlook anything that is a safety concern for the occupants.**

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12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer: Reading the article that was sent with the questionnaire and other articles online. I like the fact that we would have a store that would offer our resident fresh locally grown food. I am pleased to see that they will offer people an opportunity to invest in it as a way to raise some of the funds needed to start it.**

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13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer: I see my role on Elgin City Council as being a voice for all of our residents, to keep our residents informed, to make sure the City Manager is running the city at the direction the council has given him/her. One of eight policy makers for the city, offering suggestions to the City Manager on ways to work with those who recruit business into our community.**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer: As a realtor, I am usually one of the first people that individuals meet when coming into our community and one of the last that people they see when moving out. This would allow me to hear from people first hand what their thoughts are on our community and to communicate this to the City Manager so we can make our community a more desirable place. I would hold quarterly chats to be transparent with our residents.**

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14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer: I believe that we should assist our residents, but I would welcome working with the not-for-profits on ways to help them raise funds on their own as well.**

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15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer: In the past the not-for-profits came to the Council meetings and gave presentations, so the residents would know how their dollars were being spent and the services the organizations offered. I would like all organizations to give semi-annual updates on the funds they are receiving, the services they offer, and their agreement reviewed so we can make sure the residents are getting the most for their dollars.**

**This is the end of Brenda Rodger's questionnaire.....**

# The Elgin OCTAVE's 2017 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

## Brandon Yaniz's Answers

1) The City of Elgin deals with the matter of leaf collection in different ways in different parts of the City. In some areas the residents must bag their own leaves. In other areas the homeowners must rake the leaves out into the street, where City workers will collect them. The costs to residents vary depending upon what their area's leaf pick up policy happens to be. And in 2011, the budget task force estimated that the City spends about \$450,000 per year to collect leaves. (That does not include the cost of specialized capital equipment.)

Question 1: What are your thoughts on the City's current leaf policies?

**Answer: The money that funds the leaf pick up is the peoples money, as long as a vast majority wants to utilize this service I feel that we should provide it. I do think that there should be consistency with how leaf pickup is handled, providing a service to one neighborhood then denying the identical service to another, is not right. Additionally, by vast majority, I mean that we should look to 2/3 of the population. I believe that a representative of the people should represent all the people, even those that might be in the minority of any decision.**

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2) With the understanding that "Economic Development" means the effort to attract new businesses to move to Elgin, and to induce existing businesses to stay here or even expand:

Question 2: What are your views on Elgin's current "Economic Development" policies and methods?

**Answer: Currently our economic policies are not showing results, this is obvious from both the empty store fronts in the downtown and throughout Elgin. To be effective we have to have goals, and expect results. We need to have a comprehensive, results orientated, economic development plan focusing on small business. Small business is the backbone of any successful community.**

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3) The City of Elgin owns hundreds of properties. Many are empty lots, and many of them have buildings. Some of these properties are vital, such as City Hall, while other properties are of no value to the City. Because these properties are owned by the City, they do not generate any tax revenue, while also presenting ongoing maintenance and liability expenses. Over the last few years, city staff has compiled a complete inventory of all the City of Elgin's properties.

Question 3a: Do you think that the City of Elgin should create a strategic plan for its properties that would identify which properties have no present or future value to the city and which should be sold?

**Answer: Yes**

Question 3b: Should the plan also create a process for how properties should be sold?

**Answer: Yes. The process should be transparent and fair to avoid the perception of preferential treatment.**

Question 3c: Should the City create a temporary task force to draft a proposed plan for the city's property holdings? (The Council would have final approval authority on the plan.)

**Answer: Yes, and it should consist of professionals in the industry such as developers, and real estate agents.**

Question 3d: Do you have other thoughts on the City's property inventory?

**Answer:**

**Transparency is key, lack of transparency can create a perception of preferential treatment and backroom deals. Elgin is already facing perception issues that are holding the city back, such as the erroneous perceptions that Elgin is not safe, or that the city is not business friendly. People judge us based on perception, not reality, which is why the perception of backroom deals, however false, can hurt the city as a whole. City holdings that do not meet the long term strategic plan are a drain on our resources. If the property is identified as needed for future growth then we should retain it. Otherwise we should look at selling the property, there by expanding our tax pool to generate additional revenue. This is a winning strategy, as it will reduce costs and liabilities and introduce new income.**

---

4) Under Elgin's "revenue diversification" policy which was adopted in 2011, the residents are taxed and charged in multiple ways that are difficult to keep track of. Some of these expenses are the trash fee, natural gas tax, electrical utility tax, sales tax, increased sales tax, leaf rake out fee, yard waste stickers, liquor tax, property tax and Elgin's Telecommunications tax.

Question 4a: Do you believe the City should post "true tax" figures on its website that would clearly show a breakdown of all the typical taxes and fees paid to the City of Elgin by a typical Elgin household?

**Answer: Yes. It can't be said enough, transparency is vital and necessary for the City of Elgin to be successful. If we are to be ambassadors for our City, and attract new residents and businesses, we need to be honest in the information we put forth to the public.**

Question 4b: Do you believe that the City of Elgin should post "true tax" figures going back for at least 10 years so that the taxpayers of Elgin could effectively judge the long term effects of Elgin's taxing policies?

**Answer: Yes**

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5) Over the last 20 years, the City Council has approved millions of dollars in aesthetic and cultural enhancements in its effort to revitalize the downtown. The beautification of Walton Island, building the Rec Centre, installing brick pavers and planters downtown, creating the Kimball Street median planting, building Artspace, and the recently completed Riverside Drive are the major examples of where the City has sought to improve the downtown. And last year, the City granted about \$6.35 million to rescue downtown Elgin's Tower Building.

Question 5a: What are your thoughts on the City's efforts to revitalize the downtown?

**Answer: The intention was good, the implementation was poor. There are many things listed, some of which could help the city in the long run such as Walton Island or Riverside Drive. Others such as the Recreation Center were not very beneficial. On the day they broke ground on the rec center there were two YMCA's one YWCA, and numerous independent gyms, many that went out of business. Small business can't compete against the city, since the city can run a program at a deficit indefinitely.**

**To improve the downtown we do not need any further spending on beautifying, instead we have to implement a well thought out, results orientated, economic development plan that focuses on small business. Elgin needs to clearly define its goals for our Downtown and then take the incremental steps needed to attain those goals. When you look at successful and vibrant downtowns, like Naperville and St. Charles, you see a Downtown firmly anchored with a strong commercial corridor. These are destination venues where consumers can both shop and be entertained, translating in sales tax revenue for the cities. Additionally, we have to continue improving the erroneous perceptions people have of Elgin Creating a facility that directly competes with small businesses within Elgin does not improve our perception among entrepreneurs and small business owners.**

Question 5b: What are your thoughts on the City's investment in the Tower Building project?

**Answer: I would have preferred to see the Tower Building put up for sale on the open market before the city started assisting the development with funding. That being said it's a difficult issue, the Tower Building is iconic, seeing it crumble is symbolic, to some, of a failing city, similar to the situation we faced with the Crocker Theater. While I am uncomfortable with spending the peoples money on such a large project, having this icon crumble was not helping us improve our perception with potential small businesses.**

Question 5c: Do see building a performance pavilion at Festival Park as being an important component in revitalizing the downtown?

**Answer: Having a well thought out, and results orientated economic development plan is vital, everything else should work with this plan to bring value to existing and potential down town businesses. I see this proposition similar in scope to the City of Chicago's ownership of Soldier Field. The stadium is owned and operated by the City, but would not be possible without the permanent occupancy of the Chicago Bears. While this venue could be used on a grander scale, to accommodate Elgin sponsored festivals, it is important to have a longstanding private partnership from the Grand Victoria to make it feasible. A performance pavilion could be of great assistance as long as there was a group such as the Grand Victoria, that is utilizing the space as well as promoting the acts. We have seen a large influx of people come to the downtown with each show the Grand Victoria has done in Festival Park. If we can work with the Grand Victoria to our mutual benefit then this project could become an important component.**

Question 5d: Should the City spearhead the effort to upgrade Festival Park?

**Answer: This project has several stakeholders all of which are required to work in unison if it is to be realized. The City owns the primary land that would be used for the pavilion, the Grand Victoria would supply the primary occupancy which is the major driver for the venue, and the Kane County Forest Preserve owns the riverfront property along its bike trail. This project requires a team approach from all stakeholders.**

Question 5e: How does the Hemmens fit into your vision for revitalizing downtown Elgin?

**Answer: The Hemmens is a destination, which is important since it brings people into the downtown. This helps local small businesses. The Elgin Symphony is considered, by many, to be second only to the Chicago Symphony in the region. They attract a wide variety of patrons to their shows, which in turn provide sales tax revenue to the City via lodging and dining. It should be expected for the Hemmens to work with surrounding coffee houses, bakeries, restaurants and bars to find a way to help boost the local economy.**

Question 5f: What do you see as the best way forward in improving downtown Elgin?

**Answer: A well thought out and results orientated economic development plan that focuses on small business along with the right people to effectively carry out these duties. Currently, we outsource economic development to the Elgin Chamber of Commerce. The problem with this arrangement is that we have not established measurable metrics to which we can, or will hold, the Chamber accountable. In essence they are operating as a sub-contractor without true oversight. In the private sector when a contractor is given carte blanc approval, they do not focus on**

**results as much as those who must achieve results in order to renew the contract. The current process needs to be closely reviewed and modified towards a more results oriented arrangement if it is to be truly beneficial.**

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6) The Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) gets \$135,000 from the City of Elgin. The City is currently funding the DNA with proceeds from the downtown TIF district. But the most recent plan to fund the DNA is to create a "special service area" aka "SSA" which is a dedicated taxing district, in the downtown which would be used to fund the DNA. Please see the Daily Herald articles dated: 5/8/2016 and 8/18/2016.

Question 6a: Do you support the creation of a special taxing district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: No. Having 51% approval to implement an SSA to fund the DNA is insufficient. A slim majority deciding for all is equivalent to mob rule which is counter to the very foundation of our government. We should be protecting the minority, to do so effectively the deciding majority should be 2/3. Additionally there is no direct accountability to those paying the SSA, if a business or building owner is not satisfied with the work being done they have little to no recourse. However, I believe the DNA can do amazing things when properly supported. When dealing with organizations such as the DNA we need to put in place a system to guarantee effectiveness. The City of Elgin should instead explore outsourcing various duties to organizations such as the DNA,**

**for example Nightmare on Chicago Street, Economic Development within the downtown, etc. City staff is expensive, by outsourcing various projects to the DNA we can achieve a cost savings. By assessing performance yearly we can open up competition, so if an organization were to perform poorly the city can accept other proposals and bids.**

Question 6b: Do you support the City's current use of the downtown TIF district to fund the DNA?

**Answer: No. I believe funding should be on a project basis and not provided in a lump sum payment.**

Question 6c: Do you support the City funding the DNA through any means?

**Answer: Yes, as long as there is a metric to measure successful performance, then I would be in favor of moving various activities from city staff and other groups to the DNA or other organizations. Additionally there should be a clear metric for success, if not achieved then the organization should not be funded for such projects in the future until it demonstrates that it can achieve success.**

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7) Concerning your campaign....

Question 7a: How much money do you think you will spend on your campaign?

**Answer: I am committed to win this race, and to get out my campaign's message to as many of the residents of Elgin as possible. While this is my first time as a candidate, I have been a part of various successful campaign teams ranging from local school boards to federal offices. My budget is flexible enough to respond accordingly to the needs of the campaign.**

Question 7b: How much of that money will be your own?

**Answer: My wife and I are committed to this race and will contribute the necessary sum needed. We do not, and will not, rely solely on the funds raised from friends, families and supporters.**

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8) Over the last 4 years, there have been debates within the City Council about the "Responsible Bidder" Ordinance and "Prevailing Wage" laws. Please read the attached Daily Herald article dated 3/20/2015

Question 8: Please provide your views on what you read in the article.

**Answer: Any restriction that potentially increases costs limits the city's ability to spend the peoples money responsibly. I believe that responsible spending is the most important duty of any elected official. Given that there are state laws interfering with the city's ability of effectively solicit bids, it's important to explore alternatives. The Prevailing Wage Law is written in a manner that is somewhat convoluted in nature. The state statute requires government to pay the fixed rate, and then adopt a resolution stating that you are in agreement with the law. Regardless of any action taken by the municipality, we have to abide by the state law. It's kind of like a school yard bully punching you in the gut, and then forcing you to say you approve of his action.**

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9) In 2013, the Illinois Tollway Authority gave the buildings and the associated land from the former Fox River Country Day School to the City of Elgin. The City of Elgin has discussed repairing the facility, with original estimates at \$5 million, and then leasing the property. The City has also explored selling the property. But as of 1/1/2017, the City still owns this property, and it is not being used.

Question 9a: Would you support leasing this property and its buildings to any organization under any conditions, where the City would not at least "break even" on the transaction?

**Answer: No. The city should only lease if there is clear financial benefit.**

Question 9b: Would you want to sell the property to raise money for the City?

**Answer: Yes, assuming the property were sold in a transparent manner on the open market. This is the preferred option, as it removes a liability from the City. We really should not be in the business of leasing.**

Question 9c: Would you want to sell the property to avoid incurring repair and maintenance expenses?

**Answer: Yes. Again, the City should really not be in the business of being a landlord. Why take on the continuing liability.**

Question 9d: Would you want to sell the property to put the property back on the tax rolls?

**Answer: Yes.**

Question 9e: Do you have any other thoughts about this property?

**Answer: My concern is that this property, if it stays in possession of the city, will be developed to benefit only a few. The property is well located near the Route 25 onramp to I-90, meaning that it should fetch a fair price on the open market. As it currently sits, it is a continuing liability that the City does not need. It does not fit a direct, or future, need for the City, and should be considered a liquid asset.**

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10) The City of Elgin has sent recruiters to places as far away as Puerto Rico.

Question 10: What are your views on such recruiting efforts?

**Answer: In my opinion this was an unwise use of the people's money. Instead of focusing on hiring of specific cultural backgrounds we need to continue to focus on hiring the best people for the job. The goals of our City are to: a) reflect the demographics of its residents, and b) hire the most qualified individuals for the post. Ideally we should be growing these candidates in-house and recruiting employees from our current population. Our residents should want to stay in the City of Elgin, rather than leave our area for better opportunities. Part of our strategic long-term vision should be to make Elgin a destination city, effectively drawing recruits to us, rather than forcing us to go after them.**

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11) In January of 2014, the City Council in a 6 to 3 vote, gave final approval to a \$25million project by the Housing Authority of Elgin to rehabilitate the existing apartment building at 120 S. State, and to construct a new apartment building on the site of the recently demolished 132 S. State building.

In order for this project to proceed, the council had to approve multiple variances to City regulations. (A set of images related to this question will be emailed to you on 1/2/2017)

But long before the City Council ever saw this project, City Staff, under former City Manager Stegall told the "HAE" that their originally proposed building was not acceptable. Staff said the building was too tall, and that its appearance was too conventional. So the HAE had to go back to their architects and come up with a completely new design that would please Manager Stegall and his staff. **Months** later, after the design was finally approved by City Staff, the plan moved through zoning, then to the council.

When the public and the council saw this building, there was widespread criticism of the design and the variations which it required. Some cosmetic changes were made to satisfy the council, but supposedly there was no time left to make significant changes.

The trend for subsidized housing for decades has been to move toward LOW density. It has been determined to be best for the project residents, and for the surrounding community. But with the expansion of the public housing project at 120 S. State, the City Elgin approved a high-density project.

Question 11a: Should city staff be allowed to wield such power to completely rework the design on such a public project without FIRST getting public input or council input?

**Answer: No.**

Question 11b: Do you believe that the City should form a policy for the density and location of future public housing projects before another project can be started?

**Answer: Yes.**

Question 11c: Should the City over-look multiple zoning/code violations in approving future building proposals?

**Answer: No. Zoning and code's should be fairly applied to all. If an ordinance is problematic for one then instead of "over looking" the infraction we need to look at the code or ordinance itself and decide if it makes sense.**

12) Advocates for a locally owned food coop have been lobbying for about 4 years to create such a grocery store here in Elgin. That store is to be called "Shared Harvest". Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 5/28/2016.

Question 12: What are your views on the "Shared Harvest" food coop?

**Answer: The idea is very attractive as long as the money generated by taxing the people is not used. If the people of Elgin want such a food coop then they should voluntarily fund it, not have their hard earned money taken from them to fund projects they have little or no interest in. If there is enough demand, then the market will respond and the money available should be more than adequate.**

13) The City Council is comprised of many types of people. As with any organization, there are many rolls to fill, and many skills sets required for the council to function effectively.

Question 13a: What do you see as your roll on the Elgin City Council?

**Answer: I will bring a fresh perspective and common sense to the City Council. Common sense makes good government. Additionally, with a long history in Elgin, having grown up in a local retail business, I will be an advocate for small business, both existing and future. No other candidate has the unique history, or understanding of small business retail that I possess. This background gives me a unique perspective to help Elgin create a solid, results orientated, economic development plan that focuses small business.**

Question 13b: What unique values do you bring to the council?

**Answer: I believe that tax money is the not the cities, but the peoples. We are stewards of this money and are tasked with spending responsibly to benefit the city as a whole.**

14) Over the years as revenues from the Riverboat have declined from their historic highs of almost \$30 million per year, down to the present levels of about \$10 million per year, it has made it much harder for Elgin to provide funding to its many "not-for-profit" organizations.

Question 14: What are your thoughts on the City providing funding to its "not-for-profit" organizations?

**Answer: I love not-for-profits. When I have money left at the end of the year my wife and I donate. I will help fundraise when asked. I will work hard to assist not-for-profits. That being said, I am against the city funding not-for-profits. If a not-for-profit provides a service, or provides value that the people want, they should fund it voluntarily. Taking money by threat of force then giving that money to an organization is immoral, regardless of how noble the intentions seem to be.**

15) In the past couple of years, there have been questions raised about Elgin's Tourism Bureau connected with accountability issues, and concerns that there is not a sufficient return on the money spent by that group. Please read the attached Daily Herald article, dated 3/26/2016.

Question 15: What are your views on the Elgin Tourism Bureau?

**Answer: The money spent comes from a tax on the various businesses this service should benefit. We are seeing a situation where these businesses might feel that the financial burden of this tax is not providing value, and feel there is no accountability to them. This is the same problem seen when the city funds the Elgin Chamber of Commerce or the DNA. I feel that we should eliminate the Elgin Tourism Bureau as well as the tax funding it. This allows these businesses to have additional money to promote themselves, in a manner they feel will benefit them. Private business as a whole spends money more wisely than any government entity can.**

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This is the end of Brandon Yaniz's questionnaire.....