

Lynden mayoral candidates outline their views

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City Budget

The 2010 budget will be set by the time the new mayor takes office. Since wages make up over 90 percent of the budget, reductions often happen in the area of staffing and compensation. A cut across all departments would be the “quick” solution, but not necessarily best since departments like police and fire provide critical services we should safeguard.

Our city wisely builds in reserves, but careful assessment and vigilance will be needed in a challenging economy.

Those of us in the private business sector know only too well that difficult choices are sometimes needed — requiring weighing needs against wants and urgent matters over long-term goals.

Growth Management

Lynden planners have taken a conservative approach to growth and have predicted our current position quite accurately. The county’s push to lower future predictions and force growth into other communities will result in elevated land value costs in Lynden, as infrastructure costs will then be shouldered by a smaller population.

Lynden’s current growth approach has allowed us to keep our unique character; further infilling and higher densities could change the atmosphere of our city.

Intense planning with public input should be done before we limit our growth. Our citizenry needs to be educated on the cost and benefits of both approaches.

Economic vitality

As the Guide Meridian becomes a four-lane thoroughfare to Bellingham, we can anticipate increased traffic through West Lynden and must take advantage of the opportunity this will create.

The Planning and Public Works Departments should enthusiastically encourage any inquiries from new retail or commercial businesses, providing assistance to work them speedily through the process. Focused effort should also be made to make the downtown core an attractive option to any business showing an interest.

Secondly, Lynden must recapture revenue that is leaking south. We must actively court mid-size regional businesses to locate in Lynden and provide goods and services that are currently absent in the city limits.

North Lynden flooding

It’s important to understand that this problem originates in Canada — international aspects add complexity.

The current administration’s plan to divert this water through Pepin Creek and into Fishtrap Creek should be reviewed for viability and implemented. The largest area of urban growth for Lynden is between Benson and Double Ditch roads; if Lynden intends to grow, this land needs to be drained. The city should initiate the plan and then assess an impact fee on developers of that area.

Since growth is beneficial to all citizens, the city should bear some of the cost burden.

New water treatment plant

The existing plant is near the end of its useful life. As citizens enjoying the benefits of a good decision and the sacrifices of a previous generation, we must step up to provide pure water for those who follow us.

The cost will be high — estimates are close to \$25 million. A phased plan should be considered, as some of the costs can be spread over many years.

Effective water treatment for our city requires some pre-treatment and then filtering. Membrane filtering is a possible new technology and traditional sand filters are also available. We should move forward with the most economically viable approach.

Impact fees

Impact fees, though burdensome, seem to be the fairest way to pass on a portion of the cost of growth to those moving into new neighborhoods. Fees are never popular, but water, sewer, fire protection, streets, stormwater, parks and other service extensions are not free and must be paid for somehow.

School impact fees would be a good way to save for future infrastructure needs, but fees must be fair and reciprocal. The county government must implement similar fees to the Lynden School District since many students from the unincorporated areas attend schools in our city.

Old City Hall site

The old City Hall building is no longer useful to the city and we should pursue its sale.

The decision to purchase the 401 Front St. building was wise, since the city has a plan for south Lynden. Having Fourth Street as a full-sized street to access this area fits in with the plan. The city has adopted visions, mandates and extensive goals for its future.

When opportunities are presented which fit within master plans, we must have the flexibility to respond. If citizens want to set direction for Lynden, they must get involved early in the planning process with ideas and suggestions.

Parks and trails

Currently, all new developments are reviewed with parks and trails in mind. If a property is in the path of a future trail, developers are strongly encouraged to give some land to the Parks Department for trail extension purposes in exchange for some impact fees.

The city has taken the stance that condemnation for this purpose will not be done and I agree with that position. It is always critical to balance individual property rights with the good of the whole citizenry.

Developers should be strongly encouraged to participate in trail development, as the trail system makes Lynden very livable and desirable.

Management style

Lynden has a city administrator style of management. All department heads report to the administrator, and the administrator reports to the mayor. My style of leadership and management fits very well with this governing model, as I have experience setting global direction and oversight.

As mayor I would provide leadership and vision, implementing the council's goals and objectives without micro-managing.

Lynden is fortunate to have a very professional group working for us at City Hall who should be allowed to do their jobs with direction from the mayor and the council. I believe my diplomatic nature will be an asset in the office.

Relative newcomer to city government

It's important to remember that the experience base of the council and the

knowledge and expertise of the city administration does not leave when a mayor does.

The fact that I am not a “career politician” is the very reason I was encouraged to run. Besides administrative strengths and management skills, I bring a fresh perspective and objectivity to the office. I have no agendas, no alliances, no promises to fulfill – just a desire to serve.

In reality, the office of mayor is not impacted so much by history, but by the future. Since no one can anticipate what issues and challenges the next four years will bring, a confident leader is needed to react, assess and set direction.