

Council candidates take diverse stances

Fourteen hopefuls' opinions vary on UNL, parking and budget.

By LORI ROBISON
Staff Reporter

Traffic flow, economic growth and better communication between voters and elected officials are three priorities on which most Lincoln City Council candidates agree.

With 14 hopeful council candidates vying for three available at-large seats, Lincoln residents will have a wide assortment from which to choose during the primary elections April 8.

Two of the current at-large members, Cindy Johnson and Jerry Shoecraft, are running for re-election. Ken Haar, the other at-large member, declined to run again.

Aside from an almost general consensus as to what is important, candidates differ in their opinions of how to approach those issues, including matters regarding the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and its role as a part of the city.

Candidates expressed concerns about UNL's continued land expansion, parking issues and residential status for students and what the city's approach should be.

One possible solution included candidate Carol McShane's suggestion of tougher negotiations with city government for future local land-acquisition requests by UNL.

Candidate Dominic Sumner suggested replacing 30-minute meters around City Campus with three- or

City Council ★

four-hour timers, and a subsequent meter increase to 25 cents per half-hour, which he said would give students more parking options and reduce congestion in those metered areas.

Another candidate, Jack Schnebel Jr., suggested to require all students who have lived in Lincoln for more than a year to register their vehicles in Lancaster County. This would route taxes for that vehicle to the maintenance of the roads the vehicle uses, he said.

Aside from the tangible issues of traffic, parking and expansion, communication between the university and Lincoln was cited as the essential element in maintaining a positive relationship between the two.

"The 'town and gown' situation (in Lincoln) can be uncomfortable if people don't communicate," candidate Carol McShane said.

Shoecraft, who is the City Council chairman, echoed McShane's comment, calling for a stronger relationship with the university and the city.

Engaging students in the role of government is vital for effective communication, he said, because "the decisions we make and the end results of those decisions will affect (students)."

Candidate Wayne Hart, however, said he thought communication between UNL and local government was good.

"UNL is an integral part of Lincoln and the state of Nebraska," he said, "and we should continue the cooperative efforts of the past, furthering the city's partnership with the university."

The Star City Council Contenders

The following is a list of the candidates, their political and employment affiliations and a brief description of each candidate's top priorities. Elected at-large members serve 4-year terms:

- Paula Bennett (D)** Social Service Department; Aid for Dependent Children; medical, child-care worker.
Priorities: Increasing number of job-training programs and employment opportunities for college graduates; improving traffic flow; providing recreational programs for young people.
- Jonathan Cook (R)** owner/software designer for Computer Software Development Co.
Priorities: Improving the partnership between Lincoln citizens and local government; developing expanded uses for public facilities recreational centers and libraries; maintaining health of older neighborhoods and communities in Lincoln.
- Mike Edgar (NP)** cab driver for Husker cab company.
Priorities: Expanding neighborhood beautification program; devoting more dollars to Lincoln's public schools and family-planning programs; raising minimum wage; increasing attention to concerns of working class.
- Michael Floyd (D)** president of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska; distributor of health and home products.
Priorities: Expanding Lincoln's public transit system; improving communication between council and public; eliminating barriers to employment opportunities for Lincoln residents with disabilities.
- H. Corkey Ford (D)** trainer at Applebee's; director/producer of local stage productions.
Priorities: Developing a fine arts program within the Parks and Recreation Department of the city as an alternative to sports; improving and expanding community, youth and parent involvement with local government; reducing gang influence on local youth; creating a liaison position to act as a go-between from local communities to the council.
- Jeff Fortenberry (R)** executive, Sandhills Publishing (formerly Peed Corp.)
Priorities: Increasing community-based policing; improving efficiency of city government; reducing tax burdens; providing management of planning a downtown area while shifting from retail to professional and entertainment sector.
- Wayne Hart (R)** retired, former chief administration officer for Lancaster County Board of Commissioners; current service representative for CEGA Printing Co.
Priorities: Improving transportation and traffic flow; developing methods for consolidation of city departments; increasing public involvement in decisions made regarding acquisition of private property for public purposes; creating more user-friendly zoning and property codes for Lincoln.
- David Hunter (D)** president, State Title Services, Inc.
Priorities: Creating a more user-friendly method of obtaining and processing building permits; reducing delays of construction and development caused by zoning regulations and inspection fees; seeking public approval for major construction projects sponsored by local government.
- Cindy Johnson (R)** City Council member at-large; vice president of Signs Now
Priorities: Expanding employment and business opportunities in Lincoln; attracting more high-paying, high-tech companies to area; maintaining representative electoral process by allowing public officials to research issues and make informed decisions on behalf of the public.
- Carol McShane (D)** self-employed nursing consultant.
Priorities: Increasing the public presence in the health-care system; improving and expanding Lincoln's public transit system; creating and expanding projects aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and increasing sex education.
- Randall Nelsen (D)** self-employed realty investor.
Priorities: Increasing efforts to convince out-of-state businesses to relocate to the area; reducing traffic congestion downtown; creating programs for weekend activities for local young people.
- Jack Schnebel Jr. (NP)** plumber, Shanahan Machine and Electric in Valparaiso.
Priorities: Increasing number of local contractors working on public projects; increasing public awareness of council activities and decisions; increasing accuracy of bids by subcontractors for public projects; requiring council approval for all cost overrides.
- Jerry Shoecraft (D)** City Council member at-large and chairman; owner of Shoe's Bar and Grill.
Priorities: Creating a more efficient budgeting process with a 10-year (instead of current 5-year) forecast; increasing community-based policing; improving access to and increasing numbers of quality child-care facilities; implementing downtown development with consideration for downtown residents and students.
- Dominic Sumner (R)** secretary III, City of Lincoln.
Priorities: Increasing penalties for gang-related crimes and graffiti; increasing community policing; reducing property taxes; improving road maintenance.

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