

City Council Candidate Questions

Butch Eley

It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how would you accomplish a lower property tax rate? How do you prioritize realistic budget choices within each department to meet a goal of "lower taxes"?

It is difficult to maintain the current tax rate with the increase in inflation, but Hastings has not increased the tax levy in over 8 years and has actually decreased the levy several of those years. Council impresses on the City Administrator and department heads that they must budget for what is absolutely needed and not just nice to have items. That being said, Hastings must also look at asset management; i.e. will something cost more to keep repairing versus trade in on a new item. Do we need the requested item or service or can we do with a cheaper option. Do we really need the item or service. City staff has done very well in trimming the budget prior to it going to council.

As an elected leader, how do you feel you can impact the talent availability in our community?

By supporting economic development through HEDC, CRA, and the Chamber of Commerce we can make more jobs available in the community. Better job opportunities hopefully will bring more talent to town and retain the talent educated in Hastings. I would support the development of collaborated programs between our colleges and high schools and local businesses to train our young adults in careers available in Hastings.

Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council. Also, between the City Council and the position of City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator?

The Mayor must be able to build the council into a cohesive unit. Without council support, the mayor has no power to advance any progressive ideas for Hastings. The City Administrator runs the day to day functions of the City. The Council sets the policies for the City and acts as a checks and balance. The Council and City Administrator must have a professional and symbiotic relationship. Although the Council in some ways gives the City



Administrator “marching orders”, the City Administrator is the one who gets those ideas and policies done. The Mayor, City Council, and the City Administrator must be a team and work together to progress Hastings.

What is your vision for the growth and development of Hasting's business and industry? What specific strategies do you have in mind to attain them?

Again, I will support HEDC, CRA, and the Chamber. They are mainly responsible for searching out businesses and industries and bringing them to Hastings by providing insight to land and building opportunities, tax benefits, grants, etc. I will continue to support Planning and Zoning and Development Services in making Hastings developer friendly. My vision is that business and industry call us wanting to come to Hastings. I envision local entrepreneurs wanting to open businesses in our downtown and making our downtown a business and entertainment district. I believe Hastings should not say no or you can't do that, but “How can we help you succeed.”

As an elected leader, how will you help to shape a positive, growth-oriented narrative for the Hastings community?

I will listen to staff, citizen advisory committees and above all, the citizens themselves. I will then make educated decisions on how to move Hastings into the future. Questions I will ask are is this good for Hastings, is this good for the citizens involved, and is this economically feasible and beneficial to the taxpayer?

