

# Adams County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor District #6

**Chuck Neuman**

**1. It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how do you prioritize realistic choices?**

Number one is infrastructure, mainly roads and bridges throughout the county. #2 Maintaining services at the courthouse.

**2. How would you help the city and county work together on the new Justice Center?**

Build what we can afford. The taxpayers of Adams County cannot afford a \$38 Million Justice Center. For every \$100,000 valuation the taxpayer will pay \$50/year for 20 years, and that is if they don't go over the nickel tax. A farmer or a business person with a \$1 million valuation will pay \$500/year for 20 years or \$10,000.

**3. Some think we have too many elective officials in County government. Should Hastings consider a county manager form of government?**

Only if you involve the rural community such as farmers and other rural agribusiness people. Otherwise you'll divide the county like Adams Central / Hastings Public Schools.

**4. Do you think there are any County activities that could be managed in a joint-city/county structure, i.e. law enforcement? Street/roads?**

Probably. We, the city and county have worked together on some road projects; the county contributes money to the library and ambulance.

**5. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

I was in business in Hastings for 20 years at the Animal Clinic. Presently I've served on the Adams County Board for 18 years and am involved in a farming and livestock operation.

# City of Hastings Mayor

**Corey Stutte**

**1. It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how do you prioritize realistic choices?**

The City is already committed to a significant number of infrastructure projects, specifically with the Nebraska Department of Transportation. Using data, as we are doing with the comprehensive transportation and parking study, is a key component in making sure we continue to prioritize new projects based on the needs of our community. Using data to drive fiscally responsible resource allocations and decisions is how we will keep our taxes low and help our community continue to grow.

**2. How would you help the city and county work together on the new Justice Center?**

Having open and honest communication with County Supervisors is something that I believe we have found success in over the past few years. We participated with the County on the southeast by-pass road and they participated with us on 42nd Street paving. We also met to discuss the Justice Center site selection process to ensure citizen concerns were being addressed. There is no doubt that we need a new jail and I look forward to continuing our good working relationship with the County Supervisors.

**3. Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council? Between the position of City Council and the position of City Administrator?**

Open communication between the Mayor and City Administrator and City Council members is key. While the Council's role is legislative in nature, it is important to keep members informed of projects and changes that impact our community and specifically their wards. It is also important for Council members to feel comfortable asking the Mayor and City Administrator for information when citizen questions arise.

**4. Are you satisfied with the results of the recent consolidation of all City departments (HU/Library/Museum) under the City Administrator's authority?**

I am very satisfied with the reorganization and believe we are a more efficient and effective organization because of it. The combining of the Finance, IT, Human Resources and Engineering departments, as well as the change in chain of command for the Museum and Library, has helped break down silos to ensure we are addressing the needs of our community and the needs of the organization. As we implement the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system technology over the next couple of years, I am confident we'll see even more efficiencies gained, which will help us keep our taxes and utility rates as low as possible.

**5. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

Being mayor for the past four years has been an honor. We have seen great change, with our reorganization, department head retirements and new developments and projects that are helping Hastings grow. We have also seen great challenges with COVID-19 and tough decisions when it comes to infrastructure. That experience, as well as my past experience on the Hastings Public Schools Board of Education, has prepared me to continue to bring people together to put the needs of our citizens first and to continue to grow Hastings.

## Hastings City Council

### Ward #3

#### **Willis Hunt**

**1. It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how do you prioritize realistic choices?**

Citizens are elected into office to "serve". That is why it is called "public service". They are to represent, as best they can, the people that they serve. This is done best by being completely transparent in whatever action is needed to be taken. Transparency comes about by inviting the public to attend their meetings and public hearings that take place at a convenient time for the public and, particularly those who work during the day, to attend.

Prioritizing realistic choices can come about with the input that the public brings to the governing body regarding the priority of the many public services proposed and the costs there of.

**2. How would you help the city and county work together on the new Justice Center?**

The new justice center is the responsibility of the Board of Commissioners of Adams County. Five of the seven commissioners are elected by the electorate of the city of Hastings and it is their responsibility to lead this campaign.

The city of Hastings support could be by taking a position on the site they would select or by volunteering to serve on the site selection committee.

Any financial support would amount to double taxation on the property owners of the city of Hastings.

**3. Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council? Between the position of City Council and the position of City Administrator?**

A. From all public information available it appears to be workable.

B. City Council members, because it is not a full time position, have given up some of their administrative duties to a full time administrator, appointed by the Mayor, approved by the City Council, to carry out their

responsibilities. They are still responsible for the approval of all claim payments and contract with the city. It appears that this arrangement begun 35 years ago is providing the necessary service.

**4. Are you satisfied with the results of the recent consolidation of all City departments (HU/Library/Museum) under the City Administrator's authority?**

The recent consolidation of the city departments is now over three years old. The question is has this consolidation substantially reduced services?

Not being well acquainted with the services of the library and museum I cannot answer.

As far as Hastings Utilities is concerned I do not believe any service has been impaired or reduced. The new budget shows a reduction in staff, which should help reduce costs.

**5. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

Resident and taxpayer of the city of Hastings, Adams County for 50 years. Army veteran, college graduate, civil engineer, business owner and manager, past City Council member, past Board of Public Works (H.U.) member, past city of Hastings City Engineer, member of the city of Hastings Planning and Zoning Commission, strong continued interest in the operation of government and particularly city and county government.

## Adams Central School Board

**Chris Wahlmeier**

**1. What are your top three priorities for the AC Board of Education?**

1. Maintaining/improving upon the high standard of education that Adams Central provides to our students.
2. Producing high quality graduates who are college/career ready.
3. Being a responsible steward of the taxpayer's dollar.

**2. The COVID-19 virus pandemic has forced major changes in our education system. How do you envision future school boards providing educational opportunities to children in the Adams Central School district?**

When the state of Nebraska mandated that schools shut down during March-May of 2020, I was very proud of how Adams Central's students, staff, administration and families handled the unprecedented situation. That being said, there is much we can learn from the situation. First, virtual learning, while good, is no substitute for face-to-face instruction. Second, broadband capabilities across our district vary wildly. This made distance learning difficult for some families. As a district, we have prepared in the event that we do have to go to remote learning again in the future.

**3. Early childhood education programs help form solid foundations throughout K- 12 years. How would you propose to enhance our children's early years education as a member of the Adams Central School Board?**

As a member of the Board, I voted to approve the formation of the Adams Central Early Childhood Center on the site of the former Juniata Elementary School. This early childhood education program has done wonders in its first two years, providing our children with a strong foundation before elementary school begins. My own daughter attends the Early Childhood Center right now, and I can speak from experience about the amazing work that they do.

**4. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

I have served as a member of the Board of Education for the past 4 years. I have also served on numerous non-profit boards, and am active within the school. I am passionate about the success of our students and our school.

# Hastings Public School Board

## 1. What are your top three priorities for the HPS Board of Education?

### Sharon Brooks

- a. Use taxpayer dollars as efficiently as possible to prepare students for their vocational, professional, and life-long learning goals
- b. Encourage our community to offer diverse perspectives to serve all families
- c. Provide sound policies to support teachers, administrators, and staff members serving our students

### Brent Gollner

Continue to work with local mental health professionals for the benefit of our students and staff.

Work to enhance and build on the generosity of the voters who approved converting Morton to a preschool center and administration building.

Work with all stakeholders to balance our funding sources with the needs of children in our district to effectively improve our young people for the future.

## 2. The COVID-19 virus pandemic has forced major changes in our education system. How do you envision future school boards providing educational opportunities to children in the Hastings Public Schools?

### Sharon Brooks

Circumstances of the past few months underscore our continued efforts to address social and emotional education. In addition, we will continue to support our professional staff in their efforts to diversify educational opportunities to support students learning in person and/or online. Online educational options have helped address the need to continue offering classes when temporary shutdowns have been necessary. We shouldn't forget that these options also offer enhanced content and teaching tools during less stressful times. Indeed, our community has many education venues to offer creative learning options. Each, in their own way, have stepped up to support children and families.

### Brent Gollner

We must work proactively to enhance and develop curriculum that can be used either remotely or live in the classroom depending on the circumstances.

## 3. Early childhood education programs help form solid foundations throughout K-12 years. How would you propose to enhance our children's early years education as a member of the HPS School Board?

### Sharon Brooks

Morton Elementary School renovations and planning for expanded learning models will support the parent/teacher opportunities to offer growth and preparedness for pre-K youngsters. A county-wide effort is underway to assess needs for childcare and support for families. Information from that and collective efforts will strengthen our foundations for student success and reasons for young families to thrive.

### Brent Gollner

We must use the opportunity voters gave us this past spring to increase the number of students who can access preschool by using grant opportunities and potential federal or state funding sources.

## 4. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?

## **Sharon Brooks**

Opportunities to visit classrooms, join professional learning community gatherings, and setting goals with our former and new superintendents have enhanced my appreciation and understanding of the tremendous work being done in our schools. My background in higher education and active involvement in the education of our HPS alumni children have sustained my passion for public service. Moving forward with our community will mean continued flexibility and sharing of human and financial resources.

## **Brent Gollner**

Having served on the board for 12 years and being a healthcare professional I have seen the work our staff and community do to enhance the lives of our children. Serving on the school board demands that one has to look not only at education, but also the social and emotional health of our children. Being able to look at children's lives from many angles is a definite advantage.

# Little Blue Natural Resources District

## **1) How will you fit into this Board of Director position to protect Groundwater Quality?**

### Subdistrict #1

#### **Mason Hoffman**

I would be a great fit for the Board of Directors position for 3 reasons. First, everything that is important to me, my family, friends, and my livelihood depends on the good health and conservation of our ground water and other resources. Therefore, I take my responsibilities to protect it all very seriously. Second, I am a 5<sup>th</sup> generation farmer in the wellhead protection area. I know this land and as a farmer I'm one of the first people to see the effects our decisions have on our resources. Third, during my years on the board, I have made many useful contacts with hydrologists, irrigation specialists, and other researchers that can help increase our knowledge and improve our technology to provide better water quality.

### Subdistrict #3

#### **Russ Hall**

There will undoubtedly be a learning curve to the issues and methods employed by the board. Protection of our groundwater quality is imperative since all life depends on water! I will assist and not hinder efforts underway to improve water quality.

## **2) NRDs have many responsibilities granted to them by the State...What are your top two concerns which need to be addressed by the Little Blue NRD?**

### Subdistrict #1

#### **Mason Hoffman**

The top 2 concerns facing the Little Blue NRD are nitrates (water quality) and allocations (water quantity). Because we live atop one of the largest underground water sources on the planet, water quality and allocations are extremely important to both urban and rural Little Blue NRD areas. To arrive at regulations that are comfortable and feasible for all, we need to use the sound science provided by local universities and private researchers. Our district was fortunate to consult with both to rewrite our policies. A neighboring NRD district garnered a large outcry from patrons when revised nitrogen restrictions came out too stringent. Local experts struggled to understand the district's reasoning because the revisions did not reflect what the data suggests. I feel Little Blue's revisions are still protecting our ground water adequately without shorting our farmers.

### Subdistrict #3

#### **Russ Hall**

The Buffer Strip program seems to me to be very wise. A protective strip of land with cover crops helps to keep fertilizer and pesticide runoff from reaching the river, keeping the water purer. I would like to see the river corridor of natural land enhanced or enlarged in order to promote wildlife habitat and safe passage.

### **3) How can the municipalities and the NRD work better together to conserve our natural water resource?**

### Subdistrict #1

#### **Mason Hoffman**

For municipalities and the NRD to work better together, communication is key. This on-going communication needs to be frequent, honest, and clear. When you know more, you can do more. Conserving water is always going to be somewhat of a challenge because technology is always improving. What is cutting edge today can look like a waste in years to come. As long as we keep trying our best, keep innovating, and sharing what we learn with others, we will continue to do better.

### Subdistrict #3

#### **Russ Hall**

Hastings Utilities has a good example of this with the water purification systems built northwest of town. Now that the facility has been in operation for some time the testing records will have to be carefully examined to gauge the success of the project and this will affect further plans along this line.

### **4) What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

### Subdistrict #1

#### **Mason Hoffman**

As I mentioned before, I'm a 5<sup>th</sup> generation farmer in this district and I know this land and the resources I use to farm it. I'm very passionate about protecting it for future generations. I have a degree in Ag Business. I'm always willing to attend presentations and conferences, and converse one on one with researchers to further my knowledge of resource conservation, especially in the realm hydrology. I believe all these attributes will serve the NRD Board of Directors well.

### Subdistrict #3

#### **Russ Hall**

In college I studied environmental science and water/wastewater technology. My father was a meteorologist and taught us to understand and respect the earth and environment. I love Nebraska and the progress we have made with fruitful farms and ranches.

# Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District

### Subdistrict #5

#### **Merlin Volkmer**

#### **1. How will you fit into this Board of Director position to protect Groundwater Quality?**

I've been on Board for about 40 years. I believe in conservation of water and dams.

**2. NRDs have many responsibilities granted to them by the State...What are your top two concerns which need to be addressed by the Upper Big Blue NRD?**

Voluntary water conservation and educating use of nitrates both by farmers, city dwellers and municipalities.

**3. How can the municipalities and the NRD work better together to conserve our natural water resource?**

I believe we are working well together.

**4. What experience(s) or education do you have that would better prepare you for this position?**

Board member for years. Have high school education. Farmed for 35 years or more on irrigated land. Worked for well drilling company and for a pivot company.