

**Todd A. Larson**

**1. Why are you seeking the position of Rice Lake City Council member?** I am running, again, for City Council because I care about the City of Rice Lake. Rice Lake is a great place to live and I want to help maintain that. I have been on City Council for 3 terms, now running for a 4th term, and I see the impact the City Council can have on the growth and vision for Rice Lake. I believe that Rice Lake has been improving since I moved here in 1993. In my first terms as an Alderperson I was just learning about how the City Council functions and how the City operates. This current term, I feel more comfortable in my decision-making process and I am in a leadership role as City Council President and Chair of the Personnel & Negotiating Committee (PNC). I look forward to a 4<sup>th</sup> term, provided the citizens of Rice Lake feel that way too.

**2. What can the City do to attract a viable new workforce?** To help attract new workers to the area, the City needs to promote more, what a great place Rice Lake is to live and work in. We have a very good school system, from K-12 to 2 colleges in Rice Lake. We have a growing downtown area with a number of new small businesses adding to our retail base. The downtown helps with that small-town feel that many people appreciate. Rice Lake has numerous recreational opportunities too, from a connected bicycle/pedestrian path system, to fishing piers, to ski trails and hiking trails. Rice Lake also has numerous parks and playgrounds throughout the city that are quite nice.

**3. What will be your top 3 priorities for the City of Rice Lake this year?**

1. I would like to see more **affordable housing** become available to our current citizens and affordable housing would be helpful in attracting the viable workforce mentioned in question #2, above.
2. I believe the questions that I answered above, are inter-connected and are important to the **development of a viable workforce**. I have had the opportunity to tour area businesses and talk with the key people in these businesses and they all express that the sheer lack of people available for hire is a hindrance to their growth. The City of Rice Lake needs to help attract people to live and work in Rice Lake.
3. One item that could be helpful in attracting people to live in Rice Lake is to **promote the recreational activities/opportunities** that surround Rice Lake. Within 1 hour of Rice Lake, there are a multitude of recreational activities for people to participate in. Cross-country ski trails, hunting land, beautiful lakes, snowmobile/ATV trails to name a few. I tell our relatives back in Minneapolis "Rice Lake is a great place to be. Many people come here to vacation, and we get to live here".

**4. Do you think our main street/downtown is healthy and successful? If not, what would you do to change that?** I think our downtown is growing and becoming more successful. The Main Street Association is doing a great job of creating events and activities to draw people to the downtown area. In the past few years there have been a number of small businesses that have opened and are doing quite well.

**5. If elected, what three steps would you take to put our city on a firmer financial footing?** This question implies that the city is not on a firm financial footing and I would counter with, the City of Rice Lake is financially better off now than it was 10 years ago. But, to answer the question;

- 1)** I would work with the City Council to look for ways to increase revenues and decrease expenses.
- 2)** I would like the City Council to work with surrounding communities to see if there are areas where we could share expenses and possibly decrease our expenses. One example is, the City of Rice Lake is working to extract itself from an agreement with Barron County involving highway maintenance for county roads within the Rice Lake city limits.
- 3)** I would like the City Council to explore ways to make it easier for businesses to relocate to Rice Lake. New employers would need new employees which could drive housing and retail thereby increasing revenues.

**6. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?** I would put the \$1,000,000 grant towards a City Community Center. The idea of a City Community Center has been discussed in the community at least since I moved here in 1993. The \$1 million dollars could help shape this idea into a reality. Having a nice community center would be an asset to Rice Lake and could be used to promote Rice Lake to prospective families.