

2021 Political Candidates' Forum - Submitted Questions

Answers supplied by Ralph Veenhuis, Council Candidate

Mayor & Council Questions:

Q1. Do you think our downtown core and tourism corridor are healthy and successful? If yes, why? If no, what would you do to change that?

YES- Most stores front and location looking good and when chatting to business downtown, lots of daytime traffic flow from tourism is happening. NO: Can improve on utilizing our street cleaner more frequently in tourist season downtown. Programs /attractions to help downtown businesses obtain more evening traffic flow, so worth their investment to open later longer hours.

Q2. If Council received a \$1 million grant to use for town infrastructure any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

More downtown revitalization. Develop better parking areas downtown. Repair back alleys, road repairs all of Drumheller region. Better Handicap & visually impaired curb /business accesses.

Q3. Looking back on Drumheller's response to COVID during the beginning of the pandemic, do you feel that Council spent taxpayer dollars wisely? In other words, do you think it was wise to have spent so much on items like road closure signs, overtime and meals for staff, and spraying sidewalks and fence posts with soap?

NO. I've been privy to the comparisons between Drumheller and other Towns. We spent much more than other towns double with almost double our population .Wrong people put in charge. "Same individuals that got removed by the town administration/ Council "from the flood mitigation program after petition".

Q4. A few years ago there was talk of a youth center in town, and a gala was held to raise funds for it. Are you in favour of bringing a youth centre back to the table, and what is your overall vision for the youth of Drumheller?

YES: Proper youth center is so important. They are our future. Need good programs to keep youth active and involved in the community. Very important to support our local Church Groups that are already working on youth programs to support our youth.

Q5. 3 years ago Town Council issued a survey about implementing a curb-side recycling program. Public response was in support of the idea (even with a user fee) yet Council did not implement the program. What are your thoughts on a curb-side recycling program?

I support recycling 100 %. Not sure what the cost would be to the tax payers to do a lot of curbside recycling. I use the present setup across from 7-Eleven. Maybe another similar setup as that different area of town, if curbside too costly to taxpayers?

Q6. What are your thoughts on the COVID-19 Restriction Exemption Program being implemented at the arena, pool, and Badlands Community Facility? Some communities have opted out; is the Restrictions Exemption Program something you support or oppose for town-owned recreation facilities?

COVID -19 restriction program is great idea, as long as implemented based on solid medical information and not unreasonable restrictions unfounded due to panic and fear.

Q7. How will you gain the public's trust in the Town moving forward with flood mitigation?

Have complete community engagement available on all Flood Mitigation Program activities spending and developments that directly affect residents. Too many meetings not being aired to the public when this is one of the largest programs in Drumheller history. It will affect looks, quality of life, taxes for the future of all Drumheller residents. It is so important to do what is proper based on reasonable public safety, not over doing project so residents no longer find Drumheller attractive affordable place to call home!

Q8. Air B & B's have become very popular and there is a huge risk regarding the long term impact on the local rental market, available affordable housing, and community safety. What's your plan to manage and oversee development of Air B & B's or other short term rentals?

If rental properties in Drumheller show higher percentage of vacancy than other towns, may need to put cap on amount of Air B&B's. An issue council may need to visit quarterly to ensure our business sectors are being addressed fairly.

Q9. As Council you will be required to make decisions on complex topics, with lots of info and viewpoints. Someone will always be disappointed. What are the key factors you consider when making decisions that will guide the Town's future?

All decisions will be made with proper investigation!! And ALL decisions will be made with the best interest of the Resident the priority!!!

Q10. What do you see as the role of tourism in the future success of Drumheller and why?

Tourism is extremely important to sustain and move forward with higher expectations. It is our main revenue ticket in Drumheller since our natural gas activities drawing employment have become quiet. But we need to focus on the 8 months that the town rolls up SEPT - APR to keep the town viable for residents/business year around. We can't keep patting ourselves on the back for tourism and not being challenging Sept - Apr slow time.

Q11. Our Chamber network's research shows that members of the public have high levels of confidence in the business community to help move our province forward – what is your plan to engage business leaders in growing prosperity in our community?

Form a group that involves local business owners, getting reports on comparisons monthly/yearly business growth. To monitor direction business are headed, encouraging input from business on what is needed to support them in future growth.

Q12. Do you have any plans for seniors? From the Sunshine Lodge residents.

YES: Seniors are so important as I did mention in my platform. Need to be fully engaged with seniors to ensure they have ample programs to ensure them proper attention and quality of life and nutrition. Tech tutoring programs to help seniors to afraid to ask to have better skillset with cell phones, Ipads so communication with loved ones easier to avoid loneliness and depression. Ensure affordable mobility programs to access necessary locations around the valley. Seniors have a wealth of knowledge and my full respect!! Inquire with seniors as to other needs that we can support them with.

Q13. What is your vision for the Rotary Spray park and surrounding area, including the Aquaplex?

Huge traffic flow area local and tourist. Need to keep maintenance up to speed. More sheltered areas for parents to sit when extreme hot days hit Drumheller. Revisit hours of operation at Aquaplex and length of time slot for activities. Can never have spray park out of order again for the length of time last failure happened, it's a vital, popular area.

Q14. If elected, what are your top 3 priorities in your first few months on council?

Complete review of Flood Mitigation Program handling made transparent to public. Ensure all concerns listed on the recent petition signed by almost 2300 residents are enforced so residents can regain faith in how the Administration is operating moving forward. Put the interest of the residents most important in all decisions.

Q15. If the Province doesn't mandate, are you in favour of mandating vaccines for Municipal Employees? Yes or no.

Tough one to answer? If employee does not have condition that would endanger them receiving the vaccine, and will be mingling with employees or employees who have people they interact with away from work in the high risk of dying percentage. I think it would be prudent to strongly encourage vaccination, or have the assigned to jobs that respect social distancing. I don't know the legalities if we can force vaccines? Would have to investigate.

Q16. Do you have any plans to expand the existing dog park? The current size is not much larger than a residential back yard.

I would be in support of expanding or assigning another dog park.

Q17. Citizens often expect municipal politicians to address issues under the jurisdiction of the others such as the provincial or federal government. How will you focus on municipal issues and determine when to advocate to other levels of government?

When we do not seem to have the means to resolve local municipal issues locally and they affect our residents directly. I would work with other council members to address concerns to proper level of government to get resolved.

Q18. What type of homework have you done to prepare for being a member of Town Council?

Months of investigating the handling of major programs operating in Drum past few years. Chatted with hundreds of residents so I can get their concerns tabled properly at council meetings, which has not been happening with present council!!

Q19. If elected, what do you think your first 90 days looks like?

Lots of reading, learning and engagement with residents to regain trust in our administration.

Q20. How have you already been volunteering or serving in the town, and have you had any experience sitting on other boards?

Have sat on board of directors for daycare in the past. The company that I operate over the past 16 years has always donated profits from annual local billiards tournaments to local youth programs in need in Drumheller. Have operated tournaments to raise funds for local families in need. Collect bottles for donations to Kids Groups.

Q21. Given that our summers are getting hotter and drier, and we live in a semi-arid landscape, what town activities/initiatives will you implement to combat anthropogenic climate change?

If climate change continues to worsen, encourage some outdoor misting stations around downtown and high foot traffic area. All water activities encouraged on the river. Some public hands free operating drinking fountains in high foot traffic areas. Watering stations in fountain areas for pets.