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Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

I'm running for mayor because of my passion to serve our residents and community. I've served as a city councilor since 2007 and think our community will agree that I have championed our residents, businesses, non-profits, and our schools ever since.

I bring a lot of experience with, and knowledge of, the city to the mayor's role. I've worked with our current city council for 2 years now and have built relationships with them. I know and understand the work they will do in the years ahead. I know how much time they put into serving our city and I will be an advocate of theirs.

I also know our city staff and the time and effort they put into our city and community. Some of them have worked for the city longer than I've served on council, while I have helped to hire a few others. I know they work each day to provide for a safer, healthier, inclusive, prosperous, and welcoming community. I know how important it is for city staff to have a mayor that advocates for them as well.

Most importantly, I know our residents and businesses needs because I've worked and volunteered alongside them at planning meetings, community events, fundraisers, and ribbon cuttings. I am a parent, volunteer, employee, and consumer within North Liberty. I know and love this city.

While it's important to have priorities, I also know that I am just one person on a team of council and staff that will be formally setting priorities for the city. The mayor, then, is just one voice in the room in those discussions.

Priorities I think our council and staff will work together on include **Equity, Communication and Climate.**

Creating, and providing for, **Equity** in our community is a commitment we must make to each other. As a city we must continue to purposefully listen to, and find, ways we could do better; from setting policies to delivering services.

The city is taking some action already regarding equity, such as:

Creating the city's first Social Justice Racial Equity report in August of 2020. This report details the interaction of our police department with our community and the goals it has in the year ahead.

Creating Neighborhood Ambassadors. Providing a conduit through Ambassadors will help the city to communicate more effectively. Did you know the city's website is translatable in 4 languages? English, Chinese, French, and Spanish are all options.

Creating an Outreach and Equity Coordinator position in the city. This staff person will work on equity initiatives for seniors, low-income residents, non-native English speakers, and communities of color, among others.

Communication with our community will come in many forms. As mentioned, the city has looked to our Neighborhood Ambassadors to help the city provide for more effective/efficient communication.

Climate, and the impacts on the world around us, cannot be ignored. We need to understand the impact we have, and how we can solve for the collective good of our city.

I will re-engage our Energy Efficiency Committee at the city to find ways we can solve for the crisis of our generation.

How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

Favorable economic environment starts with prudent budgeting and efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Our tax rate in North Liberty didn't increase for an 8-year stretch over the past 14 years. Because of that, I believe it encouraged investment in our city with new homes and businesses.

Favorable economic environment also means efficient use of a builder's time/resources, for example. Code enforcement across our city is a much more streamlined and positive process than it was 10 years ago. I know our city staff is always looking for ways to deliver high value service with greater efficiency.

How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

For me, it starts with the experience our community is having with our city. If there are ways we can deliver a better service, or provide a greater convenience, we should always be open to that discussion. Knowing our building department, fire department, and city planner like I do, I know they continually ask the "how can we help" questions.

In other words, I know we have the right staff ready to serve and assist. My message to them, and to you as well, is to stay engaged with each other in communicating the opportunities that might exist.

What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

As a current council member, I may be a bit prejudiced, but I am very pleased with our use of TIF funding over the past 14 years. We tend to use those dollars only for road and park projects and know that using just what we need allows us to have more dollars available in the General Fund or for Capital borrowing purposes.

I know TIF usage is not uniform across the state, and there are certainly cities that struggle with it, but I believe North Liberty has used it appropriately and struck a good budget planning model.

How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?

As I mentioned above, the mayor is but one voice on a team that will address affordable housing. Overall, North Liberty provides a good balance of housing options, and that lends itself to affordability.

Our planning model for new housing developments, for example, includes a mix of housing stock to provide for economic diversity and opportunity in our neighborhoods. This mix allows for a variety of housing types and prices to have access to similar amenities and conveniences. It also allows for a stronger sense of community.

The affordable housing discussions over my 14 years on council have always blended into “what else can we do” and “how much could we incentivize”. The answers to those questions usually lead us to a broader understanding of the financial/community consequences of our policy/budget. I hope, then, our current policies on land use, zoning, and building types help to address these concerns. Of course, that conversation is ongoing, and I welcome any opportunity to improve upon it.

How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

I believe the most efficient and effective engagement our city can have with your membership is through our planning department, first. Our city planner, and staff, are our eyes and ears to the questions and opportunities you will have. Including the mayor, directly, into these discussions may slow the conversation:)

As mayor, though, I will have the responsibility to advocate for your memberships’ goals if they can be incorporated into new policy or guidance within our city. I look forward to hearing how I may be of service to you and your membership.

Running for North Liberty City Council – Erek Sittig

Hi Karyl. My answers to the HBA's questions are below. Please let me know if you need them in a different format or if you have any questions. Thanks for the opportunity.

1. Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

I'm running for City Council because I think someone like me is needed at this moment. The focus of my current law practice is real estate and municipal law, so I can jump into a Council seat without much of a learning curve. I've also started to realize just how different my life has been, and will continue to be, than the lives of those who are members of marginalized communities. It's important for me to use my advantages to give a voice to those who don't have them.

If elected, my priority will be to work with my colleagues on the Council to continue setting reasonable and effective policies regarding the general direction of the City, and to take steps to make sure North Liberty is a welcoming place for everyone.

2. How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

While the current economic environment is favorable to some, it isn't favorable to all, and I question whether a City government can greatly affect economic cycles that lead to economic realities for everyone. That said, on a smaller level, the City can create and continue programs that aid small businesses, make housing more available, and assist organizations that help those in need. I would urge my colleagues on the City Council to join me in supporting those actions. I also hope the Council will continue planning for the future by regularly updating the City's capital improvements plan and completing infrastructure projects to make sure we're ready for the growth we expect to continue.

3. How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

The current regulatory environment in North Liberty is mainly acceptable, though I think it could be loosened in some ways. Particularly, I think it's important to review design standards that are in place for large portions of the City and make building and access to homes and workplaces more expensive. In addition, while the City has created a zoning district that provides for nine single-family homes per acre, increased interest in tiny homes may mean that we should consider even higher density.

4. What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

TIF is a flexible and strong incentive that can do a lot of good, but that good needs to be balanced with the needs of the County and the schools, who don't get their full cut of the tax increment for a number of years. I think the City's stated policy on economic development assistance and the criteria by which it reviews projects is reasonable, but I also think there's room for standard incentives if we identify holes that need to be filled. While we need to be smart about how we use TIF, I don't think North Liberty is at risk of overuse.

5. How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?

As stated previously, I think design standards should be relaxed to make building a house less expensive. I also think North Liberty lacks affordable single-family homes and the use of standard TIF incentives to promote the construction of low and moderate income housing might be appropriate. If we continue to see holes in affordable housing, I could see us implementing a required affordable housing program, but I don't think we're at the point where we need to do that.

6. How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

Individual homebuilders aren't often in front of the City Council. Once properties are subdivided, approval of individual homes is done by staff. If there are issues homebuilders think need to be addressed regarding the City's processes, I hope they'll reach out to the City Council and tell us. I also hope to be able to keep up with disseminating information from Council meetings to social media followers, and hope homebuilders will be paying attention. If there are issues that come before Council regarding policy that might affect homebuilders, I would reach out to your organization for input from your members.

Erek Sittig
Candidate for North Liberty City Council
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Running for North Liberty City Council – Brian Wayson

Why are you running and what are your priorities if elected?

I have been on the North Liberty City Council for the last two years and there are several issues and projects that have come up. I feel I have the knowledge to help these projects be successfully completed and the ability to help guide the City through issues such as COVID recovery and social injustice concerns. The immediate issue that will need to be addressed is how to distribute ARPA money to help people who are suffering or who have suffered due to the COVID pandemic. The Council will need to reach consensus on this so that the money is not delayed in getting to those who need it.

How would you facilitate a continued favorable economic environment for your community?

Economic development is a process to help better a community by promoting activities to help businesses grow, especially local companies. Businesses can provide good jobs for people which leads to improved quality of life for the individual. This in turn helps promote more business growth and the cycle can continue. School system activities to help develop and retain workers are important such as education and job training programs. Cities can help this by working to keep taxes and service fees low and investing in needed infrastructure and working to ensure the city is welcoming to all people so that the city is a desired place for people to move to. Encouraging the construction of well built and affordable housing to meet the needs of the workforce is an important part of economic development for the entire area.

How do you feel about the current government regulatory environment and how might you improve what is currently in place?

As North Liberty has increased in population; new requirements have been placed on the City such as more rigid storm water management and rental inspections. As policies were implemented to meet these new requirements local businesses were able to comment on them as they were developed. This process will need to continue. It is the expectation that staff try to identify the concerns of all stakeholders as new regulations are brought forth. It is also important for the Council to be consistent when developing new policies so that business owners know what to expect as they plan for their new business or expansion of a current one. The City has been working on a program to notify residents and businesses about expectations/regulations proactively instead of writing municipal infractions.

What are your thoughts on TIF funding for projects that enhance economic growth and are you favorably disposed as to how this has been utilized by current and past councils?

North Liberty has a successful history of careful use of TIF for infrastructure upgrades and for helping new businesses start or locate to the City. I support Agreements that clearly spell out expectations and sunset dates on TIF are required to protect the taxpayer and other taxing entities.

How do you plan to address the issue of affordable housing in your community?

Affordable housing is an ongoing issue in the area for several reasons, including lack of units, high property values, high cost of land and development, and wage issues. One of the key things North Liberty can do to promote affordable housing is to work to allow a range of housing development and not place undue regulations on developers which increase costs that are passed on the renters or home buyers. It is possible that ARPA funding may be a useful as well. Currently there is a good mix of housing in the City. Low property taxes also help lower housing costs. North Liberty now has a zoning that allows for smaller lots for houses that are geared towards homebuyers who want smaller lots with less landscape maintenance. Attracting good wage jobs will also help increase worker wages and that will make housing more affordable. Lack of housing limits the available labor and decreases opportunities for business growth.

How do you plan to engage our membership to further enhance our area?

I am easily accessible to anyone who has a concern that I may be able to help with. I encourage businesses and developers to share their ideas and concerns with the Council. I strongly encourage builders to come to City Council Meetings when they present new projects. I think that residents better appreciate new developments and projects when they are presented in person rather than just on paper copies in Council packets.