

HIGHLAND CITY
PRIMARY
ELECTION
AUGUST 13, 2019

★★ VOTER INFORMATION GUIDE ★★



YOUR
 VOTE
MATTERS

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1. Open Space and Park issues affect all residents in the City. Potential solutions may involve resident buy in, additional expenditures, allocation of resources, etc. When an issue impacts so many, what steps will you take to reach a solution?

Involve everyone, and compromise.

The issues with the Open Space Fee have, imo, festered so long because neither one of these approaches has been meaningfully employed. It's been discussed for years in the Open Space Committee, but it needs to be a real discussion across the entire city. The upcoming funding challenges will provide a perfect opportunity; we'll already be talking.

We must approach that conversation knowing what we want but determined to find a compromise that works for the whole city. If we insist it's all-or-nothing, well, we'll all get nothing.

2. After reviewing the City Budget, what are your plans to ensure the long-term fiscal health of the City?

Number one thing here is to budget for future needs.

The city buildings are 10 years old, but we don't have funds earmarked to pay for the major maintenance costs we know are coming. We project it will cost \$750k to replace playgrounds over the next 5-10 years, but we have no money earmarked to pay for them. We know we'll need to replace snow plow and street equipment, but no money is earmarked to do so. We recently pushed off the General Plan update because we didn't have money set aside to pay for it. These are just some of the examples discussed during the budget process this year.

Today, Highland has money in the bank to cover 3 months of expenses. Yet the 2019 General Fund study projected burning through all of that and running out of money at the beginning of June 2022. That's largely because a bunch of those "we don't have money earmarked for it" items are probably going to come due in the next couple years.

If we don't have enough money to do this, we need to eliminate some of those expenses, find a non-cash way to meet the needs, or increase funding (which means taxes and fees). The alternative is to push the costs onto future taxpayers.

That's what they do in Washington. That can't continue to be the way we do things in Highland.

3. If a property owner requests to rezone property to something other than R-1-40, what process you would go through to determine your vote?

I'd start out skeptical about the request. Current zoning is a long-standing plan that's based on our values. So, anyone wanting to change it bears the burden of proof. We can absolutely amend the plan, but the property owner needs to convincingly argue that doing so doesn't harm the city or violate Highland values. Giving a density bonus for additional open space is a good example of something that might meet that test.

That said, I'm a strong proponent of property rights. If a request is not going to harm the city or conflict with our values, I think we have a moral obligation to approve it, possibly subject to mitigations for neighboring owners.

4. If you could change one thing about the City moving forward, what would it be and why?

I would increase our use of volunteers.

There are services we need the city to provide (e.g., police and fire), and there are services we want the city to provide (e.g., paved roads). Once upon a time, cities didn't have to pay nearly as much for fire services because they had volunteer fire departments. That isn't really workable in today's Highland, so we pay higher taxes to fund it.

I volunteered to do data entry for the resident survey this year. This didn't really save any money, but it freed up time for city staff to work on other projects. I saw a need, and I volunteered to help. I've been attending City Council meetings for about a year, so I was aware of the need. Most people have a less twisted definition of "fun," though, so won't be at the City Council meeting to hear about what's needed. We need to reach out to residents.

This will save us money. This will increase what we can accomplish. This will strengthen our Highland community.



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1. Open Space and Park issues affect all residents in the City. Potential solutions may involve resident buy in, additional expenditures, allocation of resources, etc. When an issue impacts so many, what steps will you take to reach a solution?

I would take a holistic approach to the issue that includes adherence to laws and ordinances, and fairness and compassion for the residents involved. In the particular issue listed above regarding open space, trails and parks, we must determine what can legally be done. There exists ambiguity regarding the legality of the disposition of certain city owned properties that technically belong to all residents and consequently cannot be sold. On the other hand, the city has not adequately maintained certain public lands and trails. Here, if we use two guidelines, we will be best able to adhere to the law and be sensitive to the needs and wants of our fellow residents. I would be more than happy to discuss this further by email or at the upcoming candidate meet and greet.

2. After reviewing the City Budget, what are your plans to ensure the long term fiscal health of the City?

We need to be both more innovative and equitable in the ways we generate increased revenue and responsible in the ways we spend monies collected. And, while doing so, not overburden our friends, neighbors and fellow Highland residents, while at the same time, intelligently addressing recurring issues that require expenditures to rectify. It's a fine line.

3. If a property owner requests to rezone property to something other than R-1-40, what process you would go through to determine your vote?

Coming from a background on the Highland City Planning Commission, variances to zoning can only be granted if there are compelling reasons to do so. Economic expediency for a developer is not one of those reasons. The beauty of the proposed development is not a reason. This is another complex issue that I would be pleased to discuss in greater detail. However, it is my duty to protect the quality of life of current residents, and plan to vigorously do so by adhering to zoning laws and statutes.

4. If you could change one thing about the City moving forward, what would it be and why?

I would change few things about Highland. I would be more conservative regarding expenditures and figure out ways to better maintain parks, trails and open spaces. In addition, we must protect the quality of life that drew most of us here. Overall we are thrilled with Highland because of the family-centered and beautiful open space community that it is. My family and I love Highland and as long as we continue to honor the spirit of the city vision statement and general plan, Highland will remain the beautiful and unique city that it is.

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1. Open Space and Park issues affect all residents in the City. Potential solutions may involve resident buy in, additional expenditures, allocation of resources, etc. When an issue impacts so many, what steps will you take to reach a solution?

This is a question about the process I go through to reach a solution and make a decision. Before a solution can be reached or even considered, I always thoroughly research to understand the problem. As a member of the Planning Commission, every time I vote on an issue, I make sure I completely comprehend all the facets of the problem. I read the packet provided by city staff several times, read every citizen email, and follow up with questions. One of the most helpful things I do before any vote is to go out and drive the area that is affected by the decision. I have found that looking at a map or even an aerial view of the area in question is not nearly as impactful to me as actually driving the area. By getting out and seeing the area, I can really understand what is happening and how the issue will affect Highland. I also feel like it is important to come to meetings with a mind that is open to public comment and the ideas of city staff and colleagues. Every meeting has time set aside for public comment, and it is important to show up prepared to listen to and accept public input.

2. After reviewing the City Budget, what are your plans to ensure the long term fiscal health of the City?

A city, like a family, needs to live within its means, taking all measures to avoid debt. Under current spending, the forecasted prediction is for our city reserves to go negative by 2022. This is a problem that needs to be addressed immediately. We can begin examining our fiscal health by looking carefully at the budget to find any inefficiencies and correcting them. Next, we need to ensure that the funds we collect via the road fee and the public safety fee are used in the most efficient and effective ways. Finally, we need to look at creative ways to increase our revenue such as increasing sales tax revenue from online sales, as well as other options.

3. If a property owner requests to rezone property to something other than R-1-40, what process you would go through to determine your vote?

The default zoning for any property in Highland should be the way it is zoned in our General Plan. Any deviation should be the exception, not the rule. The first thing we need to look at in the case of a rezone is how it would impact the residents of Highland. It is our duty as a city council to protect the best interests of the city rather than to profit one individual or developer. We need to keep our small town, large lot feeling in Highland.

If it is determined that the rezone would benefit the city overall, we need to carefully consider the needs and concerns of the immediate neighbors of the parcel of land. Neighbors bought their property assuming current zoning, so their concerns need to be addressed seriously. We must make sure that the land usage is consistent with what is happening around it and that it contributes to the overall vision of Highland.

4. If you could change one thing about the City moving forward, what would it be and why?

If I could change one thing about Highland it would be to slow the rapid growth. However, since turning back time seems to not be an option outside of science fiction, I would make sure to optimize the way we manage growth now and in the future. This would include fiscal concerns, transportation plans and land use issues.

For instance, we have to be careful with our plans for what little undeveloped land remains in Highland and ensure that the projects that are approved are the right fit for Highland and consistent with what its residents want.

One of the most important aspects of this will be having ongoing conversations with residents about what they want for the future of Highland. I see one of my most important roles as being a facilitator of conversations about how we want our growth to take place. Citizens want and need to be involved in the discussions about how Highland looks going forward, and I want the future of Highland to be consistent with what citizens want. Listening is a key component of this important role.



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1. Open Space and Park issues affect all residents in the City. Potential solutions may involve resident buy in, additional expenditures, allocation of resources, etc. When an issue impacts so many, what steps will you take to reach a solution?

Open space and parks is a big issue and one that can be solved many ways. For the 2019 budget there is an increase of 100K from the Utah County Tax Assessment increase that will go towards trail maintenance. We should use that money to not only maintain the trails but also look at low maintenance vegetation along the trails. Also, let's look towards homeowners that back the trails and discuss what solutions they want.

I believe certain open space parks need to be re-evaluated. For example, Mitchell Hollow Park is part of my open space fee but it has parking, bathrooms, and pavilion reservations. The majority of people that use it aren't from my neighborhood. It should be a city park. Overall, the open space fee needs to be re-evaluated and trails and open space should be maintained.

As to selling of open space, I'm not opposed to it but there needs to be a fixed policy in place when it comes to price and criteria to selling orphan land. The price of orphan land should not be variable. Also, fixed criteria should be put in place that needs to be met when it comes to buying open space.

1. Does the city have infrastructure that runs through the lands, i.e. water and sewer lines, drainage, etc.
2. Does the land hold a value expectation for others? Do neighbors enjoy the open space and trail? Did I buy my house because of the look of the open space land, etc.?
3. Does the policy and sale of the land pit one neighbor against another?

Let's have good policy in place. There is a solution and I know together with Highland residents we can solve it.

2. After reviewing the City Budget, what are your plans to ensure the long term fiscal health of the City?

When it comes to the City Budget, I firmly believe in being less reactive and more strategic in financial planning and budgeting. A good long-term fiscal plan should look at least 5-10 years into the future. With that said, I would work to ensure that Highland's long term plan includes revenue and spending projections for at least 5 years along with the impact of changes in tax and spending policy. I would continue, with staff, a consensus process for estimating revenue, rainy day funds, regular budget status reports and debt oversight. To be fiscally healthy long-term, I would like to see Highland City have a balanced budget that meets the short and long term needs of the community, and is resilient in the face of economic uncertainty.

3. If a property owner requests to rezone property to something other than R-1-40, what process you would go through to determine your vote?

I would first have the request go through the Planning Commission. I would review their recommendation and background information that led up to that information. I would also talk to the property owner, go out and look at the property, and not just get his perspective, but any others that the rezoning would affect.

4. If you could change one thing about the City moving forward, what would it be and why?

I love Highland and there really isn't a whole lot I would change. The trails, open space, large lots, views, and residents are amazing. I would say the one thing I would change about the City moving forward is the budget. We've put off capital projects for too long and a good portion of our income is based on building permits. What happens when capital projects can't be put off any longer and the city is built out and not receiving the revenue it once depended on? Now is the time to have a long-term plan in place and look at unique ways to increase revenue and decrease expenses.

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1. Open Space and Park issues affect all residents in the City. Potential solutions may involve resident buy in, additional expenditures, allocation of resources, etc. When an issue impacts so many, what steps will you take to reach a solution?

The open space issue is one of the primary issues that the new city council will need to address. Although ~26% of Highland residents live in open space subdivisions, about a quarter of the cost to maintain those spaces comes from the general fund, which is paid for by all Highland residents. As stated above, this affects all Highland residents in one way or another, and as such it will be critical to receive feedback from all residents who want to voice an opinion. In addition to regular city council meetings, it will be important to have other means of hearing from residents about the options for addressing the open space issue. This may include other public meetings, surveys, and one on one conversations. It is also important to ensure that we are following established legal precedent when selecting an option, and to do our best to determine the unintended future consequences of the potential decision. As a city council member, I will listen to all views, and will work with the city council, staff, mayor and residents to come up with the best possible solution.

2. After reviewing the City Budget, what are your plans to ensure the long term fiscal health of the City?

Until I entered this race, I was not aware of the significant challenges that this city faces from a budgetary standpoint. According to an independent analysis of the city budget, by 2022 Highland City will be operating in the red. This means that during the term of the new city council members the budget will shift from a positive cash flow to a negative cash flow, unless revenues are increased or expenses are reduced – or, more likely, both to some extent. According to a recent report from the Utah Taxpayers Association, Highland currently ranks 43rd in population and 4th in per capita income of residents (among the 50 largest cities in Utah). According to the same report, on average Utah citizen in those 50 cities pay \$635/year in city taxes and fees; Highland residents pay \$525. Looking at the same data as a percent of city taxes and fees paid per \$1,000 of income per resident, on average Utah residents in the top 50 cities pay \$24 out of every \$1,000 they earn, and in Highland we currently pay \$13. I do believe that the Utah Taxpayers Association report demonstrates that Highland is one of the top 5 fiscally responsible cities in Utah; however, I do not see how the budget deficit that is projected by 2022 can be avoided without raising some city taxes. What I can promise is that I will take a very close look at all expenses as well as all proposed tax increases, and will work closely with the rest of the council, staff, mayor and residents to resolve the budget issue before the projected deficit becomes a reality.

3. If a property owner requests to rezone property to something other than R-1-40, what process you would go through to determine your vote?

There are several things to consider when reviewing a request for rezoning. The first thing I would consult is the city master plan to understand what changes would come as a result of the rezoning request. The next important consideration would be those residents that would be most affected by the rezoning. I would want to hear from those residents who live around the area in question, as well as those who live in the surrounding subdivisions and on the roads that would be feeding the rezoned area. It is also critical to remember that every decision sets a precedent, and I would be very careful about setting new precedent because of a rezoning request. The decision by the city council could have far reaching effects that would affect other areas of the city in future rezone requests. The promise that I will make on this topic is that I will carefully consider all aspects of a rezone request, and that I will be very hesitant to allow exceptions to the R-1-40 zones.

4. If you could change one thing about the City moving forward, what would it be and why?

We came to Highland because of the rural feel of the area, and because of the large lots and open spaces. As I consider what I would change, I can only think of one thing: I would change the budget to better align with the city requirements in order to prevent the budget deficit that is currently projected for 2022. Other than that, I want to maintain Highland as it is, with large lots, open spaces, and wonderful residents.