

Questions for Town Council Candidates 2015

1. What are your thoughts on the current animal control ordinance? Did you vote in the special election held on December 4th, 2013 and if so, how did you vote and why did you vote that way? Should you be elected, are you open to a review of the ordinance to see how it is working? How do you feel about the role the USFW played in this issue in our town?

I voted against the most recent ordinance changes. I believe the current ordinance is unnecessarily restrictive, especially (but not limited to) the winter hours regulation. I think the prior ordinance was more than sufficient, but lacked proper enforcement. I like the addition of plover monitors (beach monitors) to add a layer of education and cooperation, but I am confident that the majority of dog walkers were already very understanding of the needs of the plovers and took adequate measures to ensure their protection. I didn't feel then and I still don't feel now, that there was sufficient evidence that dogs presented a unique threat to the plovers, though they were singled out as such. I think most reasonable animal owners are more that happy to help promote the welfare of a species, bird, or otherwise.

I think all who enjoy it can reasonably share the beach, while also ensuring the plovers (and other migratory shore birds) are protected. If elected I would continue to work to ensure the plovers remain adequately protected and look at ways to continue to strengthen the education and outreach programs, while also ensuring the proper level of enforcement is applied. I also would prefer that Scarborough maintain control of our beaches, rather than allow the USF&W to take control. We must balance the needs of the entire town and the USF&W have a very narrow scope of purpose.

I think we have reasonable accommodations with the other outdoor spaces, though I would want to ensure we don't continue to restrict the available off leash opportunities of dog owners without specific and validated reasons to do so.

2. Why are you running for Council? List your top three priorities and proposed solutions and the single most important thing you hope to accomplish as a Town Councilor.

Scarborough is an amazing place, we have beautiful beaches, great schools and a wonderfully quiet lifestyle for people to raise families, or retire to. In the past several years we have seen too much divisive rhetoric, an extremely difficult to navigate budget process and a lack of effective communication, which leads to misinformation and mistrust. I am hopeful that I can help bring Scarborough back to a place of reasonable, practical and calm discussion about the issues that effect everyone, such as taxes, land access and economic growth.

My top three priorities as a councilor would be;

- 1) Establish clear, effective and respectful avenues for community dialog around the issues that face our town. We have gone too long allowing the divisive rhetoric to set the tone of the conversation. I think that we need to go back to the basics, present the facts without bias and then discuss what the best path forward should be. I think we need to do a better job of making information available to the public in a clear and unbiased manner and I think we need to allow for discussion and provide answers to questions in a timely manner. In doing so, I think we would begin to repair the public trust in the process and remove the “us vs. them” mentality that has taken hold. We all want our community to prosper, our schools to maintain excellence and our seniors and those on fixed incomes to be allowed to remain in their homes.
- 2) Revise the budget process. We have experienced three years of unprecedented turmoil with our town and school budget process (resulting in multiple failures at the ballot at a considerable town expense).

The recent budgets have been very difficult to understand, not effectively communicated and in some cases purposely inflated. I would work to bring us back to looking at a comprehensive 3-5 year plan that would address the needs of the community, municipality and schools in a comprehensive and understandable manner and provide residents with an expected yearly spend. I would work hard to ensure all stakeholders were given a voice and that the needs of the community were properly balanced. I would urge all parties to be transparent in their practices, be realistic in their requirements and be prepared to defend their proposals in a public forum.

I would ensure that the schools receive the most favorable allocation of money that the budget can allow and ensure we are taking just as hard a look at our town wide spend in other parts of our total budget, so the schools aren't subjected to unfair scrutiny simply because their piece of the pie is necessarily larger.

I would also continue to work with our elected officials to ensure our town is properly funded by the state at fair and equitable levels and that that funding is provided in advance of us our establishing our budget. As we have seen in the last few years, we have had to underestimate the level of State funding we eventually received and this has placed an even greater burden on our budget process.

We need to establish the costs for running the municipality and schools and ensure we have a full understanding of those costs, how the money is being spent and ensure we are balancing those needs with the ability of the residents to fund them. I

have 20 years of experience formulating clear, effective and reasonable budgets that allow for growth, while also maintaining fiscal prudence. I believe that practical and real world experience will be beneficial as we work to repair the rebuild our current process.

Lastly, I would never look to save money at the expense of school sports and activities, but rather would look at finding additional funding from our local and state business community, or paring down existing administrative costs from the town as a whole. Our children should never be seen as a bargaining chip and I would ensure their needs are always my first priority.

- 3) Encourage business growth and tie those businesses to the community in a more comprehensive and positive manner.

Obviously a critical component to our budget is the growth of our business community and support for our local services from those businesses. I think we need to look at more creative ways to draw businesses to Scarborough and work with current and new businesses to get them involved with the community in a more in depth way. I'd like to see more business and school interaction and support, as well as explore ways to make additional funding for our schools be a required component to business in our town.

Our tax base requires a healthy contribution from our business community and I want to be sure we continue to strengthen that base by continuing to make Scarborough a preferred destination for new businesses to open, while also ensuring current businesses are being given every incentive to grow and prosper in our town.

I have worked with fortune 500 companies and also been at the forefront of opening new businesses in Maine and I understand the business climate and ways to engage business owners that allows for them to feel welcomed and be a part of the community in a real and measurable way.

3. Do you believe that there is an apparent lack of trust in town governance and our local process? Why or why not? If you do believe trust is a concern what do you attribute that to? What personal attributes would you bring to address that concern and what steps do you believe the current and future Councils could take to rebuild trust in the community?

Unfortunately I do feel there is a significant lack of trust for our current processes. I think we have allowed our budget and other specific interests to become too polarizing and draw lines between neighbors. I think that there have been too many occasions

where we have seen personal interests supersede what is best for our town and consequently the communication around those issues has turned sour.

I believe we are all human, we all have things that interest us more than another and we all have desires about how our town is run. As a Town Councilor I believe you are charged with doing the right thing for the town, even if it doesn't align with what is "right" for you personally, or doesn't match up to your own personal preference. I think it's necessary to engage in discussions about these things, have civil debate about their merits and then enact policies that reflect the majority decision. Then I think it's important to support those decisions and be able to effectively communicate why they were made.

I have served for 5 years as on a board of directors where I have voted many times against my own personal interests, because it was the right thing to do for the greater good. I have spent 20 years in a business climate that required me to be an active listener, engage in all levels of discussions and make decisions that are fair, reasonable and understandable. I believe I have the strength of character to stand up for what's right and not always choose the path of least resistance.

I believe I am capable of learning new ideas, taking constructive criticism and changing my opinion if presented with a more compelling one. I don't go into decisions with my mind made up, but rather wait to hear all sides of an argument before making a decision. I think that would serve this position well and allow me to be a better servant to the town as a whole. I am also capable of admitting when I was wrong and instead of defending that wrong decision, I will take ownership for it and will work hard to correct it. In my career I have made business decisions that impacted the lives of thousands of people and I don't take that responsibility lightly. I would bring the same level of care to a role on the Town Council.

4. What do you consider an appropriate tax increase for the next fiscal year? What do you consider an appropriate yearly increase for our school budget? What are your thoughts on this year's budget process? Please include ideas for change or improvement including any cost-revenue analysis you might conduct.

I don't think there is an arbitrary number that you affix to this question. I think the responsible thing to do is look at the needs of the municipal, school and associated budgets with an open mind, allow for discussion about those needs and then make decisions that best align with the will of the residents, as well as the ability of the town to fund them. I think we need to be realistic about our ability to fund our yearly budget and ensure we are being prudent, transparent and fair with how we spend the taxpayers money.

I think I have captured my thoughts about this years (and the prior two years to that) budget process in my prior answer and I would only add that I do believe that having

experience in drafting, presenting and enacting budgets over a 20 year career, where I was required to explain the costs and why they were important, as well as get stake holder buy-in would be beneficial to have on the Town council. I don't think our budget process needs to be contentious every year, or a fight between the different budget entities, but rather we should be concerned as a whole community with providing the best funding we can afford and ensuring that those funds are applied to the things we believe are the most important.

5. How should the Council / Town deal with its current level of debt?

We need to understand how this debt has accumulated, ensure we are receiving a reasonable return on our investment and assess what debt load is responsible to continue to incur. It is not a bad thing to carry a certain level of debt if you can A) afford the payments and B) you are financing things that are prudent to finance.

All bonds should be brought up to public debate and voter approval. However, the town should be making the proper determination on things that should be operating expenses (e.g. revised property tax assessments) vs. items that are depreciative in nature (e.g. town equipment, new buildings) and are more logically funded through a bond.

I think there is a sense that "bonds" are free money to some extent and we need to be more transparent on the cost of that bond over it's lifetime and why it is more beneficial to spread out that payment. While Scarborough maintains an excellent credit rating, we don't want to abuse that rating by assuming too large a debt load. Just because we can finance it, doesn't always mean we should. Like anything else in life, our ability to maintain payments will fluctuate as the town evolves (and businesses and home owners come and go) and it's better to leave a cushion on our finances than to spend up to the edge of what we can "afford".

6. What are your thoughts on the recent controversy over access and parking at Higgins beach? If elected, how would you address similar citizen concerns?

I believe we have spent an inordinate amount of the town's time, energy and resources managing the yearly Higgins Beach access issues. There is no other neighborhood (beach front, or otherwise) that has been the source of such a consistent level of rancor and I think it's time the town backed away from taking such an active role in being involved in these issues. As I understand it, Higgins Beach already has a homeowners association and I think it's their responsibility to manage the needs of their community and work together to solve their issues.

I have seen no evidence that there is a problem of any magnitude that requires a consistent police presence, nor continued town intervention. The police chief himself has already stated that any addition to the current parking ordinance would be

unenforceable and I am not inclined to think our Police officers time is well spent monitoring a select few parking spaces in one neighborhood.

I think there needs to be a better understanding between all parties involved (residents and users of the beach) and that mutual respect would be a great way to start to solve these issues. I would encourage the homeowners to take pride that they live in a desirable beach community that attracts many different types of visitors and I would also encourage those visiting to be respectful of this access and not abuse their hosts. I would hope that calm and reasonable discussions would bring mutually agreeable terms of use.

7. Do you think it would be appropriate or in the town's best interest to explore its right of eminent domain for access at Higgin beach? This could effectively end the ownership debate proactively. Why would you or would you not support that approach?

No, I also don't think it's the town's right to forcibly take a person's property. While I don't think we should expend additional town resources to arbitrate these disputes, I also don't think we should force a resolution in this manner. A person's property is theirs and unless there was some extraordinary circumstance, they should never be deprived of that right to own their property. I don't believe this circumstance exists in this situation and I would vote no if that were ever brought to the table.