

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Posted as they have come in from Candidates

DFET's primary interest is in supporting effective and democratic government. It is a non-partisan organization.

GARY LOVE

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in the city government, including the police department?

Absolutely! There should never be gray areas or items that are hidden from our citizens, because the people of Oak Ridge deserve nothing less than a high standard of trust in service. That is what they pay taxes for.

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain and/or profit?

Yes, my mission is to serve the people of Oak Ridge. I have worked all my life and need no more, and I think to serve and profit is a betrayal to our community.

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police department?

Yes, because no matter how small a complaint might be, someone took the time to voice it. It is important to them, and it would be a disservice not to hear them to determine the extent of investigation or resolution.

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII era heritage housing?

Much of the housing has been remodeled by people who have lived there all their lives, and they should be able to continue living there. Others, for whatever reason have let their properties deteriorate. Initially I would like to build a relationship with our postal carriers and meter readers. They are front line eyes and ears of our community and could help us identify those living in substandard conditions. When identified, I would like to be able to offer property owners options such as low interest loans provided through the City of Oak Ridge to remodel and update those properties. A requirement for this loan might be that all material and manpower be drawn from labor and companies within the City of Oak Ridge. I would also like to strengthen our neighborhood associations which could help with low level maintenance such as painting and yard work. Lastly, I would like to see our city have a crew of men that beautify and maintain our curbs and storm water gutters.

5. What is your position on the use of photo traffic enforcement?

I am against it. Most of these cameras were known to city residents and were avoided. Traffic increased on roadways built to support local residential traffic only. It burdens our road infrastructure, increases new safety concerns and builds a negative perception of the Oak Ridge area to outside visitors.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda before general obligation bonds which will increase the city's debt are issued?

Yes, because I do not want to raise debt. Any debt is too much. I want to concentrate on increasing revenue to pay off debt. If debt is raised then the people of Oak Ridge who pay it should have a voice in accepting it.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

We need them both. Many times a smaller business will spin off a larger business and Oak Ridge needs them both to create a diverse economy. The more diverse the economy, the stronger it will be. The only way to generate new revenue is by allowing new homes, retail business and industry and other interested parties a welcoming hand when looking for a place to relocate or begin. I believe the city could do a better job when recruiting business by explaining the merits of living in such a wonderful community.

PEDRO OTADUY

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in the city government, including the police department

YES

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you gain and/or profit?

YES

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police dept.

YES

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII era heritage housing?

Provide incentives for their replacement, for extensive remodeling, and for their updating while maintaining the historical appearance.

5. What is your position on the use of photo traffic enforcement?

I am not in favor of mobile units. Reason: they can be used arbitrarily to target individuals and/or particular neighborhoods; they can be selectively applied to that friends and like of the operator do not get cited. I am in favor of fixed units only if they are operated indiscriminately. That is, if public Employees, including law enforcement, pay the fines from their own pocket when caught and not in an official emergency. Advantages include lower risk of being harmed by interacting with a human carrying a lethal weapon, lower cost, and no impact on insurance.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda before general obligation bonds which will increase the city's debt are issued?

YES

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

The ones needing help are the small businesses. The owners are local, their finances are marginal, and (they) invest 100% of their efforts and 100% of their income into the community. Big businesses have bigger pockets, bigger goals, and their interests reach way beyond the local city. Unfortunately, they have more muscle and extract multi-year sweet deals from lame local communities. Big businesses goal is to increase their profit margins and benefit outsiders.

ANNE GARCIA GARLAND

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in the city government, including the police department

Absolutely. To any degree that government is not open, it is vulnerable to corruption. It is my belief that the best results come from engaging as many citizens as possible with the decisions and operations of government.

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain and/or profit?

I cannot see how any decisions of council could bring me personal profit (monetary gain) but I would certainly recuse myself from any decision which did so. In fact, when a contractor with whom I have a business was one of several involved in a decision by council to accept them for future possible service, I made sure to acknowledge that publicly. I did not recuse myself from the vote because it provided no possible benefit to me or my project.

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police dept.

I have. I do. I will. As a result, I am occasionally not popular with a director but my job is to be the representative for the citizens and try to improve relationships between citizens and their city administration.

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII era heritage housing?

This is not a simple answer question. It is not even a simple question. Some of our problems are with housing which landlords have allowed to deteriorate. We have made the first step there by passing an inspection ordinance which allows the city access between occupants of homes. Now we need to provide sufficient inspectors. The fire officers may be trained to do the initial inspections. Our Housing Authority has offered to train them.

Some of our problems are with residents who own their homes but have too few funds to maintain them at a level they would if they could. One way this is being addressed is to apply for a TVA energy grant that would allow us to do energy upgrades to 300 homes with high energy costs. A citizen group recently applied for a grant to paint homes for folks who can't afford it. They didn't get this particular grant but they are setting an example and there will be other opportunities.

I believe that we also need a city government-led volunteer program to help people do things like mowing, hedge trimming, gutter cleaning, and maybe pressure washing.

The Land Bank was established to accept or buy heritage housing which has deteriorated to the point that it either can't be restored or that the owners are unwilling to maintain. The Administrative Hearing Officer which the state has approved will simplify many problems with recalcitrant owners that the regular courts can't have much effect on.

But the problems that I anticipate down the road can best be fended off by advertising our amazing heritage housing. I live in a modified "A" house. It is stunning and comfortable and a comparable house in California would cost \$3- 800,000. We need to advertise the housing we have to retirees, young people starting out, entrepreneurs, architecture aficionados, etc. for the exciting opportunities it offers. "Come make a great cottage or bungalow in the most beautiful valley on earth your own personal castle."

5. What is your position on the use of photo traffic enforcement?

If, after a proper and thorough traffic study, it were determined that photo enforcement was an effective option to control a significant problem, I would support it. I think it might be useful around some of our schools on residential streets. I cannot support photo enforcement on the Turnpike because there is no identifiable problem justifying it. The Turnpike is the Orange Route between I-40 and I-75. If we have a speed problem on the Turnpike, I recommend that the police department issue speeding tickets. Officers in person-to-person encounters have the ability to be ambassadors for the city as well as for safety.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda before general obligation bonds which will increase the city's debt are issued?

Since I supported the indebtedness which will pay for the sewer renovations that bring us into compliance with EPA requirements, it would be disingenuous of me to declare that I would or would not support such a general policy. I can say categorically that I would not approve and GO bonds for commercial or industrial infrastructure. The reason that I can support Tax Increment Financing arrangements is that the citizens are not the hook for any up front moneys and the only property tax obligated is tax we did not previously have.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

Neither. I am interested in both. I would not underwrite retail that I thought would undermine existing businesses. For instance, much as I appreciate Home Depot, I would not agree to any tax incentives because they are in competition with local hardware business. They also competed with 94 Lumber which was an existing business. At the same time, I supported the TIF for Woodland Center and now for the mall area because commerce was stagnant and the empty mall property was dragging everybody else, businesses and residents, down. I am looking for ideas on how to encourage and be supportive of new and existing locally owned small businesses.

ELLEN SMITH

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in the city government, including the police dept.?

Yes, it is important for citizens to be able to get information about the actions of our city government. There is, however, a great deal of government information that should not be made public, ranging from arrest records for juveniles to the sensitive personal information in a staff member's personnel file to rough drafts of internal memos. Because there are few bright-line distinctions between the information that should be public and the information that is not subject to public disclosure, and because it's natural for people to want to limit the information they need to disclose, I think openness and transparency are apt to diminish over time. Two areas in which current city policies and protocols may be inappropriately restrictive are:

1. The Open Records Request process instituted by the city clerk's office a few years ago for the stated purpose of promoting efficiency might have a "chilling effect" on requests for public documents. (See <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/departments/CityClerk/Records-Request/General-Information>.) People requesting documents are asked to submit and sign a form that requests their name and address and a photo ID. On its face, this is not unreasonable. However, the 4-page length of the form is likely to intimidate some people. Also, the form indicates that this is required not only for requests that might be sensitive or might require a large investment of staff time, but also for access to routine public

reports (such as the city budget and minutes of public meetings of city boards and commissions) that I believe should be freely available to anyone who asks for them and pays a fee to cover the cost of copying. Most such documents can now be obtained without a records request because they are publicly posted on the city website. Similar documents that are not on the website also should be distributed on a “no questions asked” basis.

2. I am troubled by recent reports (in news media and elsewhere) indicating that media access to some seemingly standard police incident reports is being restricted. Neither City Council members nor members of the general public are in a good position to judge most police decisions, but I'm puzzled as to why basic incident information would be withheld, except to protect juveniles and victims of crimes like rape.

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain and/or profit?

Yes. However, this is very unlikely to occur because I do not have any interests in local businesses or real estate, other than my home.

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police department?

If the voters return me to City Council, I would follow the same policy I followed during my previous service as a City Council member. When a citizen contacted me with a concern, I would try to understand the issue and try to get the matter resolved – generally by referring the issue to the city manager, making sure that other relevant staff members were aware of the situation, and following up thereafter to see what had been done. If I felt that the staff response was inadequate, I would advocate for further action from the city staff.

Note that our city charter does not permit Council members to give direction to city staff other than the city manager (and also the city attorney). The charter states:

The manager shall be responsible to the council for the administration of all units of the city government under his or her jurisdiction and for carrying out policies adopted by the council. Except for the purpose of inquiry, the council and its members shall deal with the administrative officers and employees solely through the manager. Neither the council nor any member thereof shall give orders to the manager's subordinates or otherwise interfere with managerial functions through such means as directing or requesting the appointment or removal of any of the manager's subordinates, or the making of particular purchases from, or contracts with, any specific organization. The office of any council member violating any provision of this section shall immediately become vacant upon the member's conviction in a court of competent jurisdiction.

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII era heritage housing?

The most effective thing we can do is to generate greater demand for Oak Ridge as a place to live. Greater demand for Oak Ridge will create greater demand for homes here and will stimulate more investment in all local housing, including maintenance and renovation of World War II era homes. Stimulating greater demand for Oak Ridge is a goal or a vision, not a single action. Accomplishing this goal will require significant progress in retail development and in effectively marketing the community. It also requires maintaining and enhancing the quality of our schools, public services and amenities, as well as minimizing increases in residential property taxes.

Some needed measures directed more specifically at housing include:

1. Provide practical assistance and financial resources so that older Oak Ridge homes will have greater appeal to the next generation of homeowners. To help with this, I recently contributed many hours of my time to a cooperative initiative that developed a grant proposal to TVA to obtain funds for “extreme energy makeovers” on about 300 older homes in lower-income neighborhoods in Oak Ridge. If the proposal is successful, this program will reduce living costs for some lucky residents and add value in their neighborhoods by paying for major improvements to many Oak Ridge homes, while providing a practical demonstration of how other properties can be improved to enhance livability and significantly reduce energy costs. I would like for the city, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, Oak Ridge Land Bank, and other interested parties, to showcase other “demonstration projects” that have updated the aesthetics or functionality of other Oak Ridge homes.

2. The new Oak Ridge Land Bank offers significant potential in facilitating both renovation and redevelopment in older neighborhoods.

3. The city's new administrative hearing officer function, which will enhance code enforcement, should help prevent the kind of deterioration that brings down the value of surrounding properties.

See my blog at <http://ellensmith.org/blog/2014/10/02/1296/> for further comment on this topic.

5. What is your position on the use of photo traffic enforcement?

Photo traffic enforcement is a modern technology that enhances public safety and should be part of our future – but under Oak Ridge's terms, not terms dictated by a private company.

Traffic cameras here had a positive impact on traffic safety, but there were legitimate objections to the system. I believe that Oak Ridge can benefit from the “lessons learned” in our experience with traffic cameras and bring this technology back, but under an arrangement that gives the city (not the traffic camera company) greater discretion over how the system is designed and operates. For example, issuance of warnings to all first-time speed-limit violators (and ensuring that the vehicle owner has had time to receive the warning before issuing a ticket) could prevent many complaints from motorists who blame their camera tickets on confusion about the speed limit. The city's previous

camera contract did not allow issuance of warnings after the first month of camera operation, but new contracts could be negotiated to provide this kind of flexibility.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda before general obligation bonds which will increase the city's debt are issued?

No. I have learned that most bond issues are uncontroversial, so requiring all of them to be approved by referendum would not benefit the community.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

We need both. My first priority would be support for small businesses, but it is unrealistic to expect small businesses to satisfy all of a community's retail needs. In today's economy, a community like ours needs a significant presence of national retailers in addition to local businesses.

KELLY CALLISON

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in the city government, including the police dept.?

Yes

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain and/or profit?

Yes

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police department?

That is part of the job.

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII era heritage housing?

*I strongly support the "Not in Our City" program and in particular the following two initiatives:
Initiative #5 (Housing Initiative)*

Expanding the Rental Inspection Program for our rental housing stock to include those constructed during the years 1942-1945. An overlay zone district has been created for this geographic area titled the Manhattan District Overlay (MDO). A map of the MDO can be found at <http://www.oakridgetn.gov/images/uploads/Documents/Rental%20Program%20MDO%20Map%20Feb%202014.pdf>. Many of the homes and multiple family dwellings located in this district have fallen into disrepair for a variety of reasons. However, it is particularly true for those which have become rental property. The structural integrity of these homes may be questionable, and environmental

violations are common. In addition, the safety of some residents may be at risk due to continued failure of landlords and/or tenants to comply with the health and safety standards for these dwellings, especially electrical standards. Concentrations of homes with these characteristics have resulted in blighted neighborhoods with high crime rates and low property values. This has become a significant problem for those home owners who maintain and take pride in their property and want to raise a family or retire peacefully as the value of their homes continues to fall and crime is further enabled in their neighborhoods.

Property owners who have rental property within the Manhattan District are required to register their property with the City of Oak Ridge. A registration form provided by the city or available for download must be completely and legibly filled out and returned to the Community Development Department, P.O. Box 1 Oak Ridge, TN 37831 within sixty-five (65) calendar days of receiving the registration notice. Following registration, the City of Oak Ridge staff may proceed with an initial assessment of dwelling units that are either deteriorated or in the process of deteriorating to determine if the dwelling unit(s) is in compliance with applicable environmental, housing, building, plumbing, electrical, fire, health or related codes. In the event code violations are identified, the City of Oak Ridge will pursue mandatory compliance with these environmental, health and safety codes. Upon determining compliance with code standards, a "Certificate of Exemption" will be issued, which will be in effect for a period of four (4) years unless another violation is noted prior to expiration of the four (4) year exemption time frame.

No fee will be charged for initial registration or inspections. However, if a rental property is not registered or there is a failure to comply with applicable environmental, housing, building, plumbing, electrical, fire, health or related codes, a penalty of fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day for each violation may be charged. In addition, in the event code violations are identified and the property owner fails to address the violations, there are several options available to the city:

Meter blocks may be used to prevent utilities from being transferred from the account of one individual to another occupant. In the event safety issues have been identified, utility sign-ups may be refused. The property owner may be cited to City Court, Administrative Hearing and or Building Board of Housing and Code Appeals depending on the nature of violation.

Initiative #7 (Land Bank). Establishment of a Land Bank Program to reclaim unused, vacant, and/or undesirable land for potential housing opportunities or public use requires State legislation. In 2012, Public Chapter 1096 was enacted creating the Tennessee Local Land Bank Pilot Program. The City of Oak Ridge is eligible to participate in this program. In the 2013/2014 General Assembly session the bill was amended to expand the cities/counties that could participate in the pilot. You can review the final bill at <http://legiscan.com/TN/text/HB2142/2013>

5. What is your position on the use of photo traffic enforcement?

I strongly support public safety initiatives especially around our schools. I understand that even some of the most vocal critics of the red light cameras see the logic of using them during hours when the students are arriving, in, or departing from school. Those that I have talked to would like the red light cameras turned off when schools aren't in session.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda before general obligation bonds which will increase the city's debt are issued?

It will be extremely difficult to specify exactly when a referendum would be required. For instance issuing bonds to respond to the EPA mandate is something that has to be done. If this was implemented there would at a minimum need to be thresholds established for when it would apply.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

I believe that the two can work together. For instance the Kroger Market Place has shown that the catchment area around Oak Ridge is large and vibrant. Kroger set a Tennessee opening week revenue record. That kind of draw brings shoppers to the area which can help retailers of all size thrive. Once someone is in the city no matter which store they might be visiting then it becomes easy to visit other stores.

DOC SAVARA

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in city government, including the police department?
YES

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain or profit?
I DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY GIVEN MY CAREER, BUT YES I WOULD RECUSE MYSELF.

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police department?
YES

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII-era heritage housing?

As described in my platform, I favor a policy in which renovations of the interiors are encouraged (electrical, plumbing, etc.) along with driveways and energy upgrades such as geothermal heating and solar energy. The idea is to exclude these upgrades from the tax appraisal so that if a house is worth

\$60,000 and gets upgraded to \$100,000, that last extra \$40,000 will not be taxed. This policy should attract middle income people to fix up the legacy housing, and will not decrease our tax revenue – it will probably even increase our tax revenue since the shopping power of the new residents will likely be higher. The important thing about this policy is not just that it fills the housing, but that it prevents the housing from continually depreciating. If we allow that housing continually depreciate it will cause serious long-term problems for the city, we need to reverse that trend in my plan should do that.

5. What is your position on the use of photo-traffic enforcement?

I was in favor of the traffic enforcement cameras, and perhaps I was the most vocal resident about keeping them. However, despite my belief in them, I made a promise to voters that I would not vote to bring them back: Too many residents were against the photo enforcement and preferred police traffic enforcement. We have much bigger issues facing our city, so I have agreed to leave things as they are now. Let's have officer based traffic enforcement with increased patrolling at certain times in those areas, that is in line with what residents have told me they wanted. I would like to make two other comments about it:

First, the photo enforcement policy harms lower income residents more than higher income residents. Higher income residents can easily pay \$50 and then not worry about it. This is not true for lower income residents. Other negative consequences like taking away licenses or jail time have less disparity in how they affect residents of different income. Second, since it is such a divisive issue in our community, bringing the cameras back should probably not occur unless by a ballot referendum.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda on general obligation bonds that will increase the city's debt?

Not in such a blanket way: that policy would be dangerous because if we had a tornado or some other emergency we might need to borrow money without waiting for election time. City Council emergency meetings can be called quickly, ballot referendums cannot be called quickly. What I would favor is a debt ceiling that cannot be raised without a ballot referendum. I also might favor a ballot referendum for any bond cases that are not emergencies.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

BOTH. I AM ONE OF THE FEW CANDIDATES WHO HAS PLANS TO DO BOTH.

WARREN GOOCH

1. Will you support even more openness and transparency in city government, including the police department?

Yes.

2. Will you recuse yourself from voting on and discussing at council meetings any council business that might bring you personal gain or profit?

Yes.

3. Will you advocate for citizens who come to you with concerns about city departments, including the police department?

Yes.

4. What is the most effective way to address problems associated with our WWII-era heritage housing?

We should work to develop incentives for prospective home buyers and for homeowners who are willing to update their residences. We should continue efforts to obtain available grants which can be used to upgrade our legacy housing units and to support the work of the Land Bank. We should also encourage the City to aggressively pursue enforcement actions against housing code violations.

5. What is your position on the use of photo-traffic enforcement?

This is a public safety issue, and the City should use traffic cameras in school zones during hours of high volume traffic.

6. Would you support a general policy that requires referenda on general obligation bonds that will increase the city's debt?

No.

7. Are you more interested in bringing large retail businesses to Oak Ridge or helping small businesses already here to thrive?

I respectfully disagree with the suggested premise of the question. Support for our existing small businesses and recruitment of new retail investment are not mutually exclusive. Both efforts are absolutely critical to Oak Ridge becoming a more dynamic city which attracts new residents and business investment. City government must become more business friendly, efficient, and responsive, if we are going to expand our tax base, increase sales tax revenue, and avoid property tax increases which reduces profitability for all our businesses.