

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING - MEET THE CANDIDATES
OCTOBER 17, 2017 – 7:00 P.M.
IONA COMMUNITY CENTER

PRESENT: Mayor Brad Andersen, Council President Dan Gubler, Council Member Rob Geray, Council Member Dan Garren, Council Member Kathy McNamara, City Clerk Shara Roberts, and Chief of Police Karl Bowcutt.

ABSENT: Public Works Director Zech Prouse, and City Attorney Dale Storer.

VISITORS: Susan Gardner, Layne Roberts, Pam Theriault, Tanya Orton, Dan Hunting, Valene Contor, Bruce and Merodene Case, Heather Thompson, Gerald Kirkpatrick, Kirsten Hinton, Scott Hinton, Dana Andersen, Chelsie Moore, Jordan Parker, Mike Thompson, and Emily Downey.

Meet the Candidates for the 2017 General City Election: Mayor Andersen welcomed everyone and introduced Melanie Keyes who is the Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission. He asked her to mediate tonight's forum since she is unable to vote in the upcoming election.

He explained if individuals do not want to come up to the podium to verbally ask a question they can submit them anonymously in writing with the materials provided outside of the room. Questions were also anonymously gathered via the Iona-ites Facebook page. Individuals in the audience will be given an opportunity to verbally ask the questions to the candidates if they choose.

Mayor Andersen reported the City office received a phone call from Bonneville County Elections Office notifying them they received a complaint from a citizen regarding campaign signs being allowed in public right-of-ways. It is his understanding the public right-of-way for the City of Iona starts from the middle of the road 30 feet back. Because state law prohibits this action, and a complaint was received they need to enforce it as written for all candidates. He asked if there were any questions and turned the time over to the mediator.

Mrs. Keyes reported she received quite a few messages and phone calls for questions to be used during tonight's forum. She explained each candidate will have 2 minutes to answer the question and the forum will end promptly at 7:00 pm. Mrs. Keyes requested each candidate start by making a short introduction and summary of why they are running for a political office.

Council President Gubler expressed he has been serving on the Council for quite some time now, and decided to run for Mayor as it was requested by quite a few residents.

Citizen Michael Thompson expressed they moved here in 2014 and fell in love with Iona. As a result, he wants to be involved in the community where his children will be raised because they mean the world to him and so does Iona.

Council Member Kathy McNamara expressed she is running for local office because she wants to know what the people want.

Council Member Dan Garren expressed he moved here 16 years ago and got involved with the Planning and Zoning Commission. He sat on the Commission for 7 years and served as the Chairman for 5 of those years. Last year there was a vacancy on the Council and Mayor Andersen asked him if he would be interested in fulfilling that role. He agreed as he felt it would be a way in which he could continue to grow his impact on the City and preserve what he finds special about the community. The Council appointed him into the position and he would like to continue that service.

Citizen Emily Downey expressed she has lived here for 12 years and really loves this city. She feels it's important to get involved when you care about something. This past summer she served as the Coordinator of the Iona Day annual event. Historically the City has brought in anywhere from \$200-\$500 in donations from local businesses. She was able to solicit over \$3,000 from business to make the event more accessible and free to the community. Mrs. Downey highlighted her background in marketing and communication and believes the City could benefit from utilizing those skills to really reach younger demographics.

Mayor Andersen explained he is a lifelong resident of Iona and decided to get involved. He started many community events such as the Fun Run, Easter Egg Hunt, the Trunk or Treat, and was instrumental in getting the splash pad. The biggest assets he brings as a candidate is his leadership qualities, budgeting experience, and owning a water business. Four years ago he was appointed by Governor Otter to sit on the Water Board for the State of Idaho. He also serves on the Association of Idaho Cities Water Board, and the Idaho Rural Water Association. When they discuss the life blood of Iona there is only one utility and that is water. He believes his experience and qualities make him the best candidate and that is why he is running.

The mediator inquired why each candidate wants to be involved in city government and if they previously were why did they get involved to begin with.

Council President Gubler explained he grew up in a small town where his father served on the city council. He had a lot of opportunities to observe how local government functions. When they moved to Iona he felt it was a good opportunity to get involved. He believes Iona is a great place to live and local government is where it all starts. People often get upset with federal and state level, but it starts right here.

Citizen Michael Thompson explained he has served on the Planning and Zoning Commission for one year. He expressed before he got involved he often found himself pondering why certain decisions or movements weren't being made by local government. Then it dawned on him he can't change anything unless you become a part of it. His motivation for being involved is to change things for the better and would like to see Iona flourish.

Council Member McNamara expressed she is running because she is for the people and wants to hear their voice. She sits on the Museum Committee and they are planning to do a monthly time capsule involving the grade school children with contests each month and hopes it will get parents more involved. She is here because you have to start somewhere to be able to make a difference.

Council Member Garren explained he got involved in local politics because of chickens during a meeting where the topic of discussion was whether or not chickens should be allowed within city limits. He felt if there was a decision being made that affected the whole community he wanted to be involved. He knew a gentleman that sat on the Planning and Zoning Commission and told him if a position every opened up he would be interested. A few months later he was asked to serve on the Commission and it is a great training ground for learning more about the City and local politics. He has spent many years researching the Comprehensive Plan and the City Code which outlines the protection of those values about Iona that are so special. He further expressed often times you have to make hard decisions. As long as those decisions are aligned with the characters and values of the City they are the right calls to make, and he is willing to make those difficult choices.

Citizen Emily Downey expressed her interest in local government and politics first began in high school when she was enrolled in a government class she found very intriguing. She began attending different political lectures just for fun and became involved in a program called Close Up where she had an opportunity to go to Washington, D.C. and learn more about government. She further expressed she did not expect to get involved with politics this early in her life, but after helping to coordinate Iona Days she was asked to consider it. After much consideration, she believes she has something to offer to this community and would love the opportunity to do that.

Mayor Andersen expressed he didn't have a desire to get into politics, but he did have a desire to be a part of his community. He started with organizing a community fun run, and then he was asked to consider running for city council. He started the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) 12 years ago, and discussed the importance of having youth involved in community.

Mediator asked for questions from the audience.

Citizen Bruce Case expressed each candidate is here to represent the people, and asked if they feel strongly about a certain position and the people of this community feel differently do you vote within yourselves or go with what the people want.

Mayor Andersen expressed it has happened quite a few times when he has changed his opinion about something. Sometimes there is a small minority that attends a city council meeting and it's easy to get caught up in that. However, what you have to remember whether you are the Mayor or on the Council you represent the whole community. He briefly discussed the growth around the community is going to happen whether we like it or not and you have to make decisions to manage it responsibly.

Citizen Emily Downey explained there have been several times when she has gone into a situation with a very strong opinion. She had to learn to listen to all these different opinions and sometimes her opinion would shift. She believes when it is something that is important to another person she believes it's important to listen to their side. She discussed city council meetings not being very well attended right now unless they are upset. However, when people are apathetic and quiet overall they are happy with how things are going, and if they weren't they would be in attendance. There is a silent majority that needs to be taken into consideration and what is best overall for the City and not make decisions based off of a few individuals who express angry.

Council Member Garren expressed as city representative at some level you forfeit your personal opinions and set those biases aside. We represent the community and we need to make sure the decisions are in the best interests of the community regardless of what those personal views might be. The City's Comprehensive Plan includes a survey from the community and serves as the backbone of how residents want to operate. There is a lot of opinion which is captured in that document and it really has to be one of the cornerstones of how the City moves forward. The document was established in 2007 nearly 10 years ago, and needs to be updated since a lot of people have moved out and in. He believes there is a benefit in conducting more community surveys if there are issues that are very polarized in nature to collect a broad spectrum from the public on how they want the Council to move forward.

Council Member McNamara expressed she got involved in government because of the chicken issue too. At the time, she couldn't imagine having someone else determining what can or cannot be allowed in people's private backyards. She recalled a meeting in which the war veterans were talking about the freedoms they fought so hard for. For her it's important to be listening to the people.

Citizen Michael Thompson explained at Melaleuca where he is the Facilities Manager they instill ground rules. A few of those ground rules are to be open, honest, candid, and his favorite part is owning your data. If you own your data you shouldn't have any problems. The purpose of a city council is to work together to gather data and information to make the best decision for a community. He expressed we cannot stop the growth, but we can control how it's growing. We have to do what's best for the community rather than basing it on a small majority of the City and impeding the City's overall health. He believes when you become part of the Council you should feed off of each other's ideas and opinions to always come out ahead in the end.

Council President Gubler explained when his father served on a city council they were considering establishing a secondary water system which was going to cost a lot of money. Initially his father was against it because of the cost of the system. He recalled asking his father one day which way he was going to vote, and his father told him he was going to support the establishment of the system. He then asked his father why he was going to vote for something he was against. His father told him he talked to enough people in the community and they convinced him that's what they wanted to see. He further expressed since he has served on the Council his door has always been open and willing to hear people's concerns, and he will continue to do that.

Mediator asked for questions from the audience.

MYAC representative Layne Roberts asked the candidates if they were to get elected what their plans are for MYAC and how they will benefit youth in the community.

Council Member Garren expressed he sees a lot of value in the program and as a city council representative he has been supportive of it. He thinks it's beneficial to involve youth in communities as they are the future leaders and it's the Council's duty to help support that.

Council Member Kathy McNamara expressed she is amazed by this group of kids who willingly want to be part of government and they care enough about their surroundings to be a part of things. She expressed she wouldn't make any changes to the program.

Citizen Michael Thompson expressed he is currently involved in influencing youth and preparing them for their futures through his church. He explained he doesn't know too much specifically about MYAC, but he thinks he would keep it pretty much the same. However, look into ways of improving it with input from the future Council and Mayor to prepare individuals to be the voice in the communities they will be a part of in their futures.

Council President Gubler discussed the Mayor talking about being responsible for the inception of the program, but everything MYAC does has to have the support of the Council. He feels the City Council has been very supportive of MYAC over the years. One of the concerns he has had with MYAC is the lack of representation from Iona and it being open to other surrounding communities. He feels the program should benefit youth from Iona. However, he thinks it a good opportunity and hopes it continues.

Mayor Andersen explained he started MYAC 12 years ago and yes the Council has to support it. However, it takes someone to have the vision to get it going. He has always believed it's not just about Iona. He is aware there have been split thoughts on the Council for using taxpayer's money to support this program. However, his opinion is they are investing in future leaders regardless of where you live. We teach these kids about leadership, service, and advocacy. If Council President Gubler is elected Mayor he would hope he could still be involved as an advisor.

Citizen Emily Downey explained from her own experience growing up and wanting to be involved with government she would definitely support this amazing program. She grew up about 8 minutes outside of Iona, and if there was the same opportunity she would have been involved and in turn it would have ended up benefiting Iona so she doesn't believe there is an issue with having youth from surrounding communities.

Mediator announced she was going to ask questions she received anonymously.

A question specifically listed for Council President Gubler and Council Member McNamara was why I should give you my vote when I have not seen you support past community events in the last 4 years when you have served on the council.

Council Member McNamara responded she has helped with community events. She helped served lunch at the Easter Egg Hunt. She gave out hot chocolate and donuts at the Trunk or Treat. She expressed she didn't understand why the question was directed at certain people, and questioned whether the person asking the question was in attendance.

Council President Gubler responded there are some community events he hasn't attended. However, he has helped with cooking breakfast at Iona Days and for the City Clean-Up Days through the years so he isn't sure what the merit was for the question.

A second question specifically listed for Council President Gubler thanked him for his service in the military and the sacrifice his family has made, and inquired into any mental challenges that may exist from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) when it comes to running a city and managing employees.

Council President Gubler expressed he feels he has dealt with his experience very well. He isn't sure what bearing the question has on politics and feels the last 8-10 years of serving on the Council represents who he is and how he communicates with individuals.

The third question specifically listed for Council Member McNamara expressed she has missed several city council meetings over the years and is often seen in a wheelchair. The question inquired if she was physically and mentally able to represent the citizens and commit to attending all of the meetings.

Council Member McNamara expressed she sits in a wheelchair while attending church as there is something in the building which makes her pass out. She further expressed if she has missed a meeting she had a good reason to not be there.

Citizen Jolyn Louk discussed growth control and how number of years the Planning and Zoning Commission has been trying to get Bonneville County to accept a revised Area of Impact Agreement. She asked the candidates if they are elected what are they going to do to keep moving things forward with implementing a new Area of Impact Agreement with the County.

Council Member Garren expressed he was part of fighting that fight when he served on the Commission. He explained part of the issue is from the County's perspective the City has allowed less than 1/3 acre in the zoning ordinances so they will continue to allow it in the Area of Impact. His solution is to get rid of the provision which allows less than 1/3 acre and eliminate the excuse the County is using to continue to allow it in the Area of Impact Agreement.

Council Member McNamara recalled a previous council member felt the City needed to diversify their structures such as including apartments and townhomes. She further expressed we have a small town feel and the citizens like it the way it is. However, from her perspective the City should consider annexing areas so they are able to have control on what is allowed to be developed.

Citizen Emily Downey expressed she completely agrees with the thought process of only allowing 1/3 acre lots. There is direct correlation with crime rate and high density low income housing. A lot of people assume the crime rate in Iona isn't very high, but believes people would be surprised to learn about what truly goes. In closing, she would support anything to prevent that from increasing.

Citizen Michael Thompson expressed he believes in annexing certain surrounding areas adjacent to the City to be able to have the control over future development.

Mayor Andersen agreed with Council Member Garren the City needs to pursue eliminating less than 1/3 acre from code. He has tried to tackle this issue on a few different occasions, and has

been unsuccessful up until this point. However, the City does need to get back to how the pioneers originally intended it to be with the minimum of 1/3 acre lots.

Council President Gubler expressed there is lack of respect from the County to want to abide by the City's Area of Impact Agreement, and it has been a real battle over the years. The agreement is intended to be reviewed every 10 years, and the City has pushed various meetings trying to control how the growth outside of city limits impacts us. In closing, annexation is important so there is more involvement and a voice of what the future growth of this city looks like.

Mediator asked a question received anonymously whether each candidate was in favor or against the \$3.9 million revenue water bond.

Mayor Andersen responded he was in favor of the water bond and noted the results of the community survey showed approximately 83% wanted the Council to move in this direction instead of pursuing water meters.

Citizen Emily Downey responded she fully supports the water bond based on her research because it's necessary and putting it off could be detrimental.

Council Member Garren expressed like anyone he is not in favor of paying more each month for water but it is the right thing to do for the long term health of this community. The engineering studies have shown it is a necessity and this is the path forward the majority of citizens found appropriate in the community survey.

Council Member McNamara expressed she supports the bond because the research has been done. She also believes there are things which could become available to help the City pay off the bond sooner.

Citizen Michael Thompson expressed he supports the bond since studies show the system is deficient in a few areas. There are funding opportunities available if the bond is passed to bring down the overall cost and monthly impact to each user's monthly water bill.

Council President Gubler expressed the beauty about what the Council has done is come up with a solution to fix some of the existing deficiencies with the system and project into the future. Additionally, it gives the residents of the City to have their chance to vote.

Meeting adjourned 7:00 p.m.

COUNCIL APPROVED: November 21st, 2017

Brad Andersen, Mayor

ATTEST

Shara Roberts, City Clerk