

# City Council Candidate Questions

Craig Hubbard

**It's easy to campaign on "lower taxes," but, as costs increase, how would you accomplish a lower property tax rate? How do you prioritize realistic budget choices within each department to meet a goal of "lower taxes"?**

I realize that at the city level little can be done to help lower property taxes, the city mil levy is a small piece of the problem. I do however Believe that as a council we can work together to require the departments of the city to look at their budgets with a fine tooth comb and require the departments to make cuts it would be their decision as to where those cuts are made.

I do believe the council budget review process should be more in depth than it has been over the last 8 yrs. council should meet and review each departments budget with individual dept. heads, prior to reviewing the overall budget, prior to voting. I think as a council we can strive to cut wasteful spending while still providing quality services our citizens deserve.

As a business owner and property investor All projects and purchases must be evaluated closely, I would love to have new shiny equipment, but I also want to stay in business and not put myself in a bind. I look at affordable used equipment that I can buy reasonably and repair myself, often times increasing the value of the equipment when I sell or trade for a replacement. A specific example would be the common complaint I hear from the citizens of our community about all the new trucks at the street Dept. the utilities dept, and numerous complaints about the new truck to pull the honey wagon for the sewage treatment facility.

I understand the need for the reliable vehicles, but when the citizens are struggling to pay their property taxes, pay their utilities, pay their grocery bill, The new shiny trucks become a easy target for complaints about the city not caring about it's citizens, or the citizens money. I think their are plenty of fleet lease companies who sell lower mile / hour equipment 2-4 yrs old as they come off lease. while I am not sure that is the answer for the equipment, it is a specific example as to how depts. could prioritize realistic budget choices.



Once we work to reduce the budget 3% 5% 8% whatever that may be we can look at possibly reducing the mill levy enough to show even a little relief in the citizens property tax bill, The taxpaying citizen will notice.

When accomplished we can reach across town to the courthouse and work to implement a team of county and city elected officials who are genuinely concerned about the property tax burden and work together to reduce levies and assessments. and maybe can get the school board looking in the same direction

**As an elected leader, how do you feel you can impact the talent availability in our community?**

As elected city council we are elected to be citizen representatives hopefully with my leadership skills I can point staff in the direction needed. We have plenty of great talent Here. Great technical college, Hastings College, what we need is good career opportunities to present to that talent as they are entering the workforce. We need industry: technical, distribution, manufacturing, and we need the things young talented people want we need business: retail, hospitality, service, entertainment, shopping. Most of all we must have some workforce housing so there can be a place for them to live.

Without an aggressive plan to search out businesses that present career opportunities we have nothing to offer young talented people, this is why so many of our young Hastings natives don't return to Hastings.

**Describe your thoughts about the relationship between the position of the Mayor and the City Council. Also, between the City Council and the position of City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator?**

Simple: our govt. is designed to be a strong council with a weak Mayor and Weak city administrator, not a city manager. The Council is the manager on behalf of the citizen. there has been a complete disconnect from this form of govt. for the the last 16 yrs.

It often seems staff (certain staff) has forgotten how this is supposed to work or has chosen to do things as they see fit. It would appear as an outsider looking in the current council and mayor has allowed this to happen, it would also appear that at some point staff council interaction was limited and policies were passed that communication with staff must go through the City administrator. Once again we have a city administrator form



of govt. not a city manager I think in the past city administrators have acted as they have more power than actually warranted.

The city belongs to the tax paying citizens that have invested in this wonderful place we Call Hastings. We are the ones paying the bills, it is our money paying the wages.

Our city has been doing things backwards, and it is time to change it. when elected i will push to move back to this form of city Govt. Council will set the policy and staff will make it happen

**What is your vision for the growth and development of Hasting's business and industry? What specific strategies do you have in mind to attain them?**

My vision is to work together with existing entities within our city. The Hastings economic development corporation, (HEDC) and the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber and HEDC are put in place to help with this process. I would hope as a council person I can help them in any way possible with reaching out to business looking to expand and actively pursuing those quality business's that are a good fit for Hastings. Things are happening but sometimes it seems we are moving at a snails pace.

We must promote all that Hastings has to offer, an abundance of utilities provided by our own municipally owned utility company, That offers some of the most reliable power. We have two major Railroad lines intersecting in Hastings, for larger industry we have easy access to the ability to ship by rail. We have Hastings College, turning out some sought after business, educational , and professional degrees, we have a great technical college turning out some of the most sought after tradesman in the state. once again we have the talent, right here in town. we are centrally located easy to ship goods wherever they need to go. Hastings is still a great community for prospective employees moving to town to raise their families, two good public school systems good parochial schools, good churches and church communities. these must be promoted to all prospective industry weather technical, distributive, manufacturing, or trades related.

I feel when I am elected I can reach out to other council members and the mayor and work to restructure some current positions within the city to set a couple people on task employed by the city to work with the existing entities to reach out and recruit business that fits Hastings. we need to sell all the the great things we have to offer to those prospective buyers!



**As an elected leader, how will you help to shape a positive, growth-oriented narrative for the Hastings community?**

When elected I will work to make Hastings the easiest and friendliest place to do business, Hastings has to open its arms to developers, entrepreneurs, small business, large business, industry, and we must do it effectively.

I've heard too many complaints from business owners, developers, contractors etc. to even list. I don't want to hear staff tell anyone no! it can't be done. I want our staff to look at someone and say you won't be able to do it that way but lets work together to figure out how we can make it happen.

I would search for quality education sources to train staff how to say no in a positive way, and how to work to ensure projects come to fruition as long as codes are satisfied, and safety standards are met.

One doesn't have to travel far to see that our peers are kicking our behind in this area, and not only business it bowls over into the housing market etc.

I am passionate about Hastings and if we can't work together to figure out a plan to attack positive sustainable growth, we will be headed down an extremely slippery slope. this is an aging community our 30-50 year old age demographic is quickly declining according to census.org and international population review. this is the demographic that is starting small business, buying family homes, raising families, buying goods, and services, spending money on entertainment, supporting the schools. without them sustainability will not happen.

It's outrageous to hear other candidates talk about Hastings remaining a population of 24,000 and still be able to attain a level of sustainable growth. I want Hastings to be a great place to live for everyone, not just a retirement community. Who's gonna pay the bills when we hit a 35% senior mark on fixed incomes? we are at 21% now and growing quickly. and we have a dependent minor population of approximately 35% (under the age of 20) absolutely no sustainability in our future if we don't work together now!! elections have consequences!!!

