

The Bandera PROPHEET

October 12, 2019

The Bandera Prophet invited all candidates for Bandera City Council to participate in a Q&A. Each candidates' response is published in the order in which they will appear on the November ballot.

The questions were as follows:

1. Why are you running for Bandera City Council?
2. What responsibilities does a city council member have?
3. Do you think Main Street/Downtown Bandera is healthy? If yes, how do you plan to continue its success? If no, how do you plan to improve it?
4. If you were given a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you choose, what would you do with the money and why?
5. What makes you the best candidate for Bandera City Council?

Candice Witt:

1. As a resident and business owner, I have an interest in how the city runs and being part of the positive progressive input in making decisions that are affecting my personal and professional investments.
2. I believe it is a councilman's responsibility to reach out to, and then be a voice for, the residents and business owners who are helping carry the city's livelihood. It is also important to be active within the community, support local business owners with their endeavors, create a platform for continued tourism and be responsible with resources.
3. I think Main Street has seen some revitalization thanks to ownership turnover and grant contributions from the EDC, but overall it lacks continuity in representing what the Cowboy Capital brand is trying to

portray. It would be great to see healthy, thriving businesses with a family-friendly focus, lining the entire strip. I think the EDC grant program has the right idea in assisting folks with revitalization but there should also be more activism regarding new business start-up. Improved signage to off-Main attractions would be an immediate benefit.

4. I would like to see a housing revitalization program to allow residents make repairs to their homes. This would be a complex program, involving inspectors and building code enforcement. Ideally it would be a matching grant program for homeowners to spruce up their homes, and offer assistance towards repairing plumbing, electrical, siding, roofing, structural etc. There would also be intent to identify empty dwellings and deal with those that have been condemned and allow housing opportunities that would increase the city's population, thus allowing for further state funding.

5. Being a near lifetime resident of the area, and a business owner in the hospitality industry for many years, I feel my experience lends to a unique and valid viewpoint. I have a fair and calm disposition, hearing both sides of any argument before reacting. I am not self-serving and always put others needs before my own, to a fault. I would appreciate the opportunity to provide a fresh, and positive perspective on the issues at hand regarding the future management and development of the city.

Debbie Brown:

Did not participate

Lynn Palmer:

1. I am running for re-election because I love Bandera. We have always had a strong sense of safety and community in our town, a good quality of life. I would like to see that preserved and protected. I would like Bandera to keep its small town and western feel. Decisions being made now will affect the present and our future.

2. A City Councilperson should value leadership, teamwork, honesty, have ethics and be committed to the elected position.
3. It's important the city has a Master Plan to continue to be successful. The EDC and the City Council have worked together to improve all of the business area's overall appearance with Incentive Grants for Facades. I am looking forward to the hotel being completed to bring some cohesiveness to Main Street. A pedestrian friendly Main Street would be a huge asset, but not an easy task. We need to have a vision and a plan.
4. Infrastructure-Purchase Property for a new Waste Water Treatment Facility. Our existing facility like almost everything else in our city is old and needs replacing, that is a priority for survival. If there was any money left over for fun I would like to see playscape in the City Park, to bring people back to nature. Our City Park is a gem and the Public Works Department is doing a fine job keeping it inviting to the public.
5. I do not have a personal agenda. I am representative of all people. My objective would always be to do what is going to be in the best interest of the city and the whole community. I will listen respectfully to the citizens and weigh differing opinions. I am honest in my actions and my approach to issues. I am motivated to devote the time it takes to be the best representative of the city because it is my hometown.

Tom McEachin:

1. Making a city of our size work takes many people pitching in when called to serve. A year and a half ago, I was recruited to serve as a director of the Economic Development Corporation. Six months later I was asked to run for City Council. People who observed me working in these roles urged me to stand for re-election in this year's race because of my vision, my common sense approach, and my commitment to our city.
2. Responsibilities as a City Council member include being responsive to the needs of our residents, our businesses, and our visitors, as well as to the future of the city. On issues where the public expresses clear sentiments, the council must act on their wishes. However, the public is not expected to be up to date on every minute detail of running the city,

so they rely on council members as their representatives to make decisions in the best interest of the community.

3. The shops, restaurants, bars and other attractions in our business corridor are the lifeblood of Bandera. The more stable that individual businesses are, the more stable the community is. In many ways the Chamber of Commerce, the Bandera Business Association, the Economic Development Corporation, the County Commission, and the City Council have worked together on a shared vision of promoting tourism in the area. However, communication and coordination can always be improved. We have many boats and oars in the water, but they are not always rowing in the same direction. An updated master plan is the first step to better coordinate with the various stakeholders a clearer vision for the future.

4. That hypothetical million dollars could do so much good in so many areas, but I would devote it entirely to infrastructure. The most pressing concerns facing the city – and the most costly – are street repairs and water and sewer upgrades. The challenge is finding real dollars to address those areas.

5. When selecting candidates for various committees and elected offices, we often hear a refrain of bringing in new blood. This is important for a fresh perspective on old issues and to keep stagnation from setting in. However, we also hear a refrain for continuity. Issues aren't always resolved in a month or two. Sometimes planning is in the works for an entire year, or three years, or five years or more. Continuity therefore is just as necessary to assure in addition to addressing short-term issues we are also planning for the future.

I am in a unique position to offer the benefits of both new blood and continuity. I have only been on the City Council for one year so I still offer a fresh perspective. Because I am relatively new to Bandera, I am not locked in to the way things have always been done or beholden to anyone.

On the other hand, my year on City Council served as a great tutorial on both the most urgent matters and the long-term issues. I am also the only person who served this past year on both the City Council and the EDC,

which further adds to my ability to bring continuity. Looking at issues clearly, addressing them objectively, and being committed to integrity are skills that leave me well-suited to serve on City Council.

Cindy Lou Coffey:

1. I am the only candidate who knows how to fix Bandera and secure its future. I have done this in the past. Bandera has only two industries hospitality and recreation both of which I have extensive experience in capitalizing. I want to see all businesses thrive because if business is good then there is no reason to raise taxes as the city will make the money it needs to be successful through sales and hotel occupancy taxes.
2. As a city council member it is my responsibility to be available to the public. It is my responsibility to engage local residents, businesses and organizations to build consensus on issues that affect our lives and livelihood. It is my responsibility to build mutually beneficial relationships with the county, region and state so we can work together to insure we are all successful with our joint and individual endeavors.
3. Downtown Main Street is not healthy. The foot traffic is declining for the shopping area and it can be so much more. There are many items that the council can enact without costing very much money that will create a more positive experience for our guests as well as keeping our community members in town spending locally. Again together we can build our community good will for our city and I look forward to working with the council to move the community's goals forward.
4. If the city was given a 1 million dollar grant that I would have control over I would first assemble a committee representing the community. One from each of the following: Planning Committee, EDC, local Pastor, local business and the community at large. I would then show them how to establish criteria of important issues. After establishing the issues I would then demonstrate how to make that million dollars do the work of 5 million dollars. Through matched grants, capital improvement funds, area joint investments and grant writing. All for the purpose of improving our surface infrastructure, our quality of water, our tourist

experience and the protections we need as a city to thoughtfully grow with new jobs, experiences and opportunities for all.

5. I feel that I am the best candidate because of my knowledge, my desire to see Bandera grow in a positive way preserving the integrity of our history and that all of the community is successful. It is a delicate balance when your only industries are recreation and hospitality. We have a chance to establish ourselves and take the gift the State of Texas bestowed upon us as the “Cowboy Capital of the World” but it isn’t going to happen by tossing money around with consultants who charge a lot of money for a report and then walk out the door. Instead we need someone who can get the community, businesses and organizations excited about new ideas that will generate the much needed income we need through each other and partnerships. Everybody tells me “we want a county fair,” well so do I? Elect me along with two other eager candidates and let’s get it done! Yes, I have the experience and I am willing to share. Time to have some fun!

Alan Calaway:

Did not participate

Gunnar Witt:

1. As a resident and business owner, I have an interest in how the city runs and I wanted to be more involved in the formation of the policies that are affecting my personal and professional holdings.

2. I believe it is a councilman’s responsibility to provide direction and guidance about current issues, such as budget and infrastructure and provide support to local businesses-to be a voice for what the community wants and needs.

3. In my opinion, Main Street has some healthy aspects, but I also feel there are some areas lacking that need addressed. Some businesses need face lifts, streets improved lighting, more signage and crosswalks for improved safety are just a few that come to mind.

4. I would continue building improvements along with city park including more gazebos that could possibly generate more income for

city, more BBQ areas, volleyball nets, pickleball or shuffleboard courts – use the wide open area to increase activity somehow, repair infrastructure such as the streets throughout town, continue adding sidewalks for accessibility and increasing pedestrian safety.

5. I am a local business owner, focused in providing hospitality services to locals and tourists alike, so it is in my interest to continue to support tourism and a healthy industry in Bandera. My military experience has taught me to stand up for what I believe is right and just. I think the citizens of Bandera are looking for focused leadership and transparency, both of which I would provide.

Jerry Russe:

1. I had been attending City Council meetings and workshops long before I decided to run for City Council. There were many times I disagreed and would speak up and voice my opinion. I didn't feel that my voice was being heard. I feel our money can be spent more wisely. And there were times little or no research was done before making decisions on how to spend our tax dollars. The budget has increased tremendously in the past couple of years and much of that increase has been due to large salary increases. Little to no action has been taken to maintain our existing infrastructure such as our roads and waste water treatment plant. Our existing waste water treatment plant must be replaced and moved to a different location. The City is under mandate by TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) to relocate the plant due to its location in the flood way. This is a huge expense estimated at \$6 to 7 million dollars. This has been hanging over the city for several years and no steps have been taken so far to address this issue. The City Council has not even started the first step of having studies performed to determine the best location for this project. The City Council should have had studies performed and purchased the land long ago. Many locations that may have been best suited for this project are no longer available. The decision of our current City Council to prioritize salary increases and raises and kick the can down the road and

not take action to address our existing needs are some of the reasons I decided to run for City Council.

I will do my research when decisions on how to spend taxpayer's money are made.

2. As a member of City Council I need to have an understanding of what is important to the taxpayers. I'll be a voice for the taxpayers, attend Council meetings and workshops, develop budgets, determine where to spend money, plan for the future needs of the city, pass ordinances, make sure all taxpayers are treated fairly and spend time listening to the needs of the taxpayers.

3. There has been much progress to improve the facades of existing businesses along Main Street. A lot of grant money was given by EDC to assist business owners in those improvements. I feel we need to do whatever we can to make these businesses more wheelchair accessible and make improvements to the sidewalks while maintaining the historical heritage of the buildings.

4. I would set aside \$750,000 for the new waste water treatment plant and dedicate \$250,000 for road maintenance and repairs.

5. I feel that I am more informed and better educated about our City operations than any other new candidate. I was very involved and vocal at City Council meetings long before I decided to run for City Council. I have attended all City budget meetings and budget workshops through the entire budget process. I have spent hours educating myself on the operations, budget, and current and future needs of our City. I have studied previous year's budgets and have seen how our budget has exploded in the past couple of years. I have owned several successful businesses and know how to prioritize spending revenue. It's always about maintaining existing infrastructure before buying something new. If you don't have the money to spend you can't just raise the taxes before first making all attempts possible to cut spending. My previous career was in medical laboratory science. I am analytical, believe in doing research, and basing my decisions on that research, and the facts. I grew up in a small town similar to Bandera and always enjoyed the small town lifestyle. I chose Bandera as my home and I really care about the

City of Bandera. Bandera has a unique heritage and I will do everything I can to preserve it.

Rebeca Gibson:

1. I am inspired to continue to serve the city because I love this work and realize the importance of continuity for the sake of the city's progress, maintenance and responsible growth.

2. A council member must serve the good of the residential and business community under the framework of federal, state and local laws. A council member must work openly and honestly with a variety of entities including citizens, organizations and taxing units to insure the quality and depth of facts and points of view that inform their decision making process. Self initiated education and information gathering is critical. A council member must always hold higher than self their fiduciary responsibility to those they serve.

3. It is observable that vehicle traffic has increased and this can be said to affect flow, and safety to drivers, pedestrians and horse traffic. Unfortunately horse traffic has become sparse to say the least.

Improving and increasing off Main Street parking, sidewalk connectivity and accessibility are among projects that would help to create a better downtown atmosphere.

Thanks to creative and forward thinking, through the incentive programs approved by council, the EDC has helped several businesses improve the aesthetics of Main Street and I hope that this will continue.

Storm water drainage must be improved along Main Street as well in order to protect our business owners from the undue financial stress of flood recovery that is caused from this under maintained aspect of city infrastructure. (This issue applies to some residential areas off Main Street as well.)

4. I would put that million towards sidewalks and accessibility. While this amount may not cover the entirety of Main Street, it may be close enough to cover the Central Business District. I would do this knowing that there are several other funding opportunities available that council is

and has been pursuing for other important and worthy causes like water infrastructure, flood mitigation and parks for examples.

5. I am grateful to have been in service of the city for these past two terms and to have served as Mayor Pro Tem for three of those four years, if re-elected I do promise to serve with the same dedication and tenacity that you have seen in the past and with an evolved education, sense of understanding, and ability to get this challenging and important work done for the city, its residents, businesses and visitors.