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PROGRESSIVE PEORIA POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE CANDIDATE SURVEY

Peoria City Council at large survey

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Please include a resume and any campaign literature that you would like to share with the Progressive Peoria PAC.

What are your top three priorities if elected?

The following issues are my priorities as an at-large member of the Peoria City Council. All three issues are critical to the continued growth and prosperity of our community.

1. **Jobs** - Using economic development to attract jobs and expand businesses.
2. **Safety** - Promote cooperation between police and neighborhoods to improve public safety programs.
3. **Education** - Partnering with schools to develop job training solutions and opportunities for continued education

What are the key business issues in the city and what will you do to address these issues?

1. **Economic Development:** The city must embrace economic development strategies in order to position our community as a more competitive place to do business. In today's economy, Peoria is not competing against our neighbors in East Peoria and Pekin, but rather places like Davenport, Des Moines, Kalamazoo, Springfield, Louisville, etc. The following considerations are part of creating a more competitive community:
 - o Peoria currently suffers from a "business will just happen attitude." As a community, we need to be more proactive in attracting new business and create the right environment to expand existing businesses. Part of this environment

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includes less regulation, more intergovernmental cooperation, and streamlined oversight processes.

- Peoria taxes must be competitive with other cities. I applaud the efforts of the Chamber to provide a thorough review of how taxes in Peoria compare with our competitors.
- We need to focus greater attention on creating jobs. Peoria is poised for tremendous job growth in the fields of technology commercialization, healthcare delivery, and intermodal logistics. I support efforts to retain high-growth businesses such as FireFly in Peoria and will work to create a positive climate companies to do business in the city.

2. Education and Training

- As an at-large council member, I will work to partner and collaborate with our local school systems. The success of District 150 is critical to the long-term growth of the city –as are all the school districts within Peoria. I strongly support working with the schools and believe that the city can be a facilitator for important educational opportunities that will attract new residents to public schools in Peoria.
- Many businesses in Peoria have attractive job openings, but are experiencing difficulties finding employees with the appropriate skills and training needed for employment. This is another area where the city can partner with our local schools and the Workforce network to facilitate job training and soft skills education. Peoria businesses can benefit greatly when employees are better prepared for the work environment.
- **Public Safety**
 - Peoria needs to be a safe place to live and do business. Both employees and customers should feel comfortable going to and from businesses throughout the entire city. I will work with the police department and neighborhood associations to facilitate greater cooperation and build relationships that combat crime.
 - I support the Mayor's initiative to use new technology, such as wireless cameras, as an additional tool to improve public safety.
 - Current perceptions of high crime, especially when based on low-occurrence statistics (such as homicide), create difficulties for businesses recruiting new employees. In addition to working for improved safety, I will also communicate that Peoria is a safe community in which new residents can live, work, and raise a family.

What will you do to make Peoria city government more effective?

- One important example is to encourage greater horizontal communication between various city departments. Our current system relies too heavily on vertical communication through the City Manager. Unfortunately for developing businesses, many city departments do not talk to each other. My involvement with management of the Peoria NEXT Innovation Center has given me first hand experience of this difficulty. In recent months I have struggled with receiving opposite directions and guidelines from

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the departments of planning and public works. Just like the private sector, all city departments should be expected to function as integrated business units that communicate and collaborate to serve the customer –in this case, the public.

What do you believe needs to be done to make Peoria City Hall more business friendly and how will you accomplish it?

- Foster communication between various city departments
- Provide businesses with a roadmap to guide the way through the development process
 - I am working with the planning department on an effort which is currently underway to accomplish this.
- Provide a positive atmosphere on the City Council for businesses
 - Excessive criticism of city staff discourages employees to go above and beyond to assist business development in Peoria

What do you see as key budget issues facing the City of Peoria? Would you consider alternate sources of revenue other than a real estate tax increase? If so, what alternative source do you prefer?

Key issues

- The costs of employee benefits (healthcare, pension, etc) are rising rapidly and represent the biggest budget challenge the city will face.
- While employee and retiree sacrifices enabled the FY2007 budget to proceed with few changes, FY2008 will again require careful consideration

Revenue Sources

- I believe that increasing taxes should always be a last resort. In November, the City Council considered an increase in our share of real estate taxes. I strongly opposed this proposal. In this period of historic growth in our community, an increase in real estate taxes, however small, is the wrong strategy to increase revenue. Property tax increases are typically a very poor way to generate increased revenue, particularly in a time of robust economic growth in our community. I believe that increasing property taxes could have the following effects:
 - Places undo burden on business owners.
 - Discourages new businesses from locating in the City of Peoria.
 - Discourages existing businesses from growth and expansion in the City of Peoria.
 - Can lead to a downward revenue spiral if businesses leave Peoria as a result of increased taxes.

Alternatives

- The best alternative to increasing taxes is to grow the overall size of the economy through economic development strategies. The resulting effect is more business, jobs, and tax revenue for the City of Peoria.

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- Some members of the council have proposed alternative methods of generating revenue by exploring user fees for emergency calls, utilities, etc. These proposals merit further study and consideration.

How will you work to develop and maintain a cooperative intergovernmental relationship with other local units of government, particularly that of Peoria County and Peoria Public Schools?

County

- The City of Peoria and Peoria County should continue current intergovernmental relationships that benefit all taxpayers and provide logical efficiencies. Examples include:
 - Shared snowplowing responsibilities
 - Contracts with the City to provide road striping for County roads
 - Programs and services such as ESDA, the health department, and PAWS should be explored to ensure fair participation from both city and county governments

Schools

- All of our local school systems are important to the future of Peoria –not just District 150. However, District 150 in particular, is in need of assistance and as a member of the City Council, I will work to be a positive collaborator with both administrators and school board officials. I feel strongly that the success of District 150 is tied inextricably to the success of our entire community. And as recent graduate of District 150, I will work diligently to serve as a positive partner on the City Council.
- I am greatly encouraged by recent efforts to provide additional opportunities for Peoria residents through our public schools. I hope that new families moving to our region will be encouraged to locate within the City of Peoria and realize the educational value of our public schools.
- The city should also encourage partnerships with schools that facilitate greater vocational training opportunities for our students. Pekin High School has done a great job of creating programs that enable students to learn relevant skills and apply their education in a particular career path. As a council member, I would encourage Peoria schools to investigate this model.

What is your opinion on the Heart of Peoria Commission’s proposed form based code for targeted areas of the City?

- I am supportive of Heart of Peoria Commission’s form-based codes proposal for selected growth areas in the city. Certain planning guidelines, such as new urbanism, are entirely appropriate for certain areas in the city. The West Main Street corridor of Renaissance Park and the Warehouse District are the best models for this type of

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growth strategy. In other areas of the city, a new urbanist model is obviously not appropriate (in the northern growth cells, for example). I greatly appreciate the efforts of the Heart of Peoria Commission. The notion of creating an attractive and exciting urban environment that is desirable to young professionals is very important to the future of Peoria and its businesses.

What do you believe the City should do to attract and retain businesses in the City?

- The current atmosphere for business attraction is poisoned. In Peoria, business incentives are classified as handouts, not as investments. While city leaders should never be careless with scarce funds, we must remain competitive with other communities.
- The following economic development tools must be embraced and used effectively to facilitate growth in the Peoria economy and generate jobs for our citizens:
 - Tax Increment Financing
 - Enterprise Zones
 - Tax Rebates
 - Business Retention Visits

What is your position on the use of cumulative voting for the at-large council positions?

- I believe in a one person, one vote system. However, it is my understanding that the current cumulative voting system would be very difficult to change.

What is your position on City funding for the Economic Development Council of Central Illinois?

- I support funding for the Economic Development Council of Central Illinois, but would abstain from voting on this subject as a council member.