

Restore the Balance

Seven political principles to guide political conduct

We must do more than simply be against extremism. We must embrace an alternative set of political principles. We believe these seven principles should guide us.

- **We believe** that political parties should vigorously compete over values, principles, and ideas, but also find common ground to solve problems and pass needed legislation. Gridlock is not an option.
- **We believe** facts, supported by irrefutable evidence, are the basis for what to believe and how to act. No civilization can endure when its citizens believe there is no such thing as objective facts or truths.
- **We believe** that no one has a monopoly on the best public policy proposals. That means the ability to listen to and understand both sides of a debate are a prerequisite to finding practical solutions.
- **We believe** public interest must come before party interest. This means putting what is right ahead of loyalty to a party or an individual party leader.
- **We believe** that problem-solving is more important than fund-raising. Extremists line their pockets then use the funds to amplify division instead of producing solutions.
- **We believe** citizens should be free to run for office or volunteer to support the candidate of their choice without being threatened or harassed. Extremism uses intimidation because it cannot stand up to independent, open-minded thinking. Instead, it relies on the mentality of the mob.
- **We believe** it is time to expect citizens to embrace individual responsibility. Extremists always talk about “freedom,” but never mention the responsibility to the community that comes with it.

Candidate Questionnaire
Grand Junction City Council

1. What qualifications and experience do you have that can give voters confidence that you should be a member of the Grand Junction City Council? Please be specific.

I have been a city resident for 33 years, raised two successful children here and have a vested interest in the future of Grand Junction. I have also been a champion for this community and its small businesses during that time. Through my experience on many city committees including the One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, Marijuana Task Force and ARPA (American Recovery Program Act) Advisory Committee I have gained an extensive knowledge base of the policy issues facing the city and will be well equipped to serve on Council.

My leadership and collaboration skills were key in this community's response to the pandemic as I worked with untraditional partners such as the Mesa County Department of Health to keep our businesses open and our citizens healthy through the 5 Star program which became a national model for other communities.

I am a Certified Economic Developer through the International Economic Development Association and therefore understand how the many elements of community create a strong local business climate and serve as the foundation for a strong and vibrant city.

All of these experiences, knowledge and skills make me well qualified to become the next City Council Member at large for Grand Junction.

2. By now, you have read and considered the seven political principles we feel should guide political conduct in Western Colorado.
 - a. Do you endorse each of the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Western Colorado?

I do not endorse the seven principles of Restore the Balance in their current format. Based on the rating system used to score candidates in the last election I realize that this will probably greatly diminish my chances of receiving your endorsement.

My political conduct has been and always will be guided by what I consider to be the fair and right thing to do coupled with a respect for everyone I interact with regardless of whether their views align with mine or not. I am guided by a genuine desire to serve, a willingness to do my homework and work hard. I want to hear varied points of view from the citizens I hope to represent before I make a decision that affects their daily lives.

- b. If you endorse them all, please explain how you will work to execute these principles.
 - c. If there are one or more principles you do not endorse, please identify them and explain why.

3. It is important to let people know that you put the public interest first. In looking back over the past year, are there any decisions the Grand Junction City Council has made that you do not agree with? If yes, how would you have changed them?

One of the decisions made by Council is to give the City Manager the ability to make fleet purchases up to \$500,000 without any Council oversight. That is a decision I would work to rescind. Regardless of the rationale for the original decision, citizens of Grand Junction expect the Council to be good stewards of their tax dollars and I feel strongly that no employee of local government should have authority to spend up to a half million dollars without any sort of checks or balances.

I am sure there are others but for me the greatest concern isn't decisions that have been made by the current City Council but their lack of speed in getting to ANY decision. This Council appears to suffer from analysis paralysis. A perfect example of this lack of action is how long it has taken the Council to begin distributing the American Prosperity Act (ARPA) funds. First it took several months to appoint the advisory committee. That committee worked diligently for seven months and issued a final report with recommendations in September, 2022. It was late December before the Council began reviewing those recommendations and it was mid-February before decisions were made to begin disbursement of any of the funds.

If elected I will explore options with other Council members for speeding up the process without sacrificing due diligence. If necessary, the Council could meet more frequently to get to timely decisions.

4. In the aftermath of the January 6th insurrection, studies and security experts are citing increased risks to local governments from extremist groups who now target meetings of city councils and school boards for potential violent protests and demonstrations around false election fraud and conspiracy theories.
 - a. How would you as a local government official push back against those who are undermining public confidence in free and fair elections?

Honestly, I have not seen our City Council be the target of such protests and demonstrations around this topic. And the January 6th event is now 24 months in the past so I am not sure how much of an issue this is for a member of the Grand Junction City Council. As a local government official, I would always be open to discussion with my constituents, regardless of their beliefs.

- b. What should be done to protect elected officials and the public from those using harassment to stop civil engagement and the exercise of democratic processes?

The city has already done a good job of ensuring that civil engagement is open and accessible to everyone. There is always a period at Council meetings for public comment and the "We Speak" feature allows citizens to speak their minds

online. Our job as city officials is to give equal weight to whatever form of communication citizens use to engage with us.

One area of concern for me is how the Council has used the agenda process to repress communication with groups as disparate as area contractors and a local homeless coalition. In the former case a request for meeting with Council was made in October of 2022 and not granted until four members of Council outside of leadership voted to grant such a meeting in January 2023. Our Council should be willing to meet with groups and make room on the agenda for the airing of issues that lead to communications and eventual resolution.

5. The City of Grand Junction Charter provides that council elections are to be non-partisan. What do you think about local political party organizations supporting or opposing council candidates? Will you reject political party endorsements and/or direct contributions to your campaign from political parties; why or why not?

I will accept endorsements and direct contributions for either party or both parties in this election because it IS nonpartisan. I welcome support from those who publicly acknowledge that I would be a good city council member and leader for this city.

6. In the wake of the recent Orchard Mesa Pool controversy, the question of resolving multi-jurisdictional conflict has arisen.
 - a. What are your feelings regarding intergovernmental cooperation in the Grand Valley on this or other issues?

Intergovernmental cooperation and agreements have been part of the culture of the Grand Valley for a long time. The Persigo Agreement is an example of an agreement that once negotiated has worked well to serve the citizens of Grand Junction and Mesa County. Cooperation should be pursued when there are common interests and common goals to leverage joint resources and avoid duplication.

However, agreements such as the one that created the Orchard Mesa Pool, while perhaps useful when first enacted can and should be reviewed over time and when appropriate modified or even cancelled.

In the specific case of the Orchard Mesa Pool, I believe the best way to proceed is for the city to take over ownership and operations. The County and the School District should be required to provide resources for the future maintenance and operations in exchange for being relieved of any further responsibility for this facility. For more on my thoughts regarding the Orchard Mesa Pool, I would direct you to my blog,

<https://votedianeschwenke.com/2023/01/orchard-mesa-pool/>

- b. What approach would you take in dealing with intergovernmental relations and resolving intergovernmental conflicts?

Intergovernmental relations in order to successfully navigate conflicts and disagreements need to be built on individual relationships established between elected leaders based on open communication, trust and mutual respect. Regular joint meetings to build rapport and discuss issues before conflicts arise is the approach I would embrace.

- c. How would you protect Grand Junction's interests while still serving the most people in the most efficient and cost-effective way?

My first responsibility as a City Council member is to the citizens of Grand Junction. If there is a way to leverage their tax dollars to their benefit by collaboration on joint projects with other entities then that option should be pursued. A clear example of how this is working well is the cooperation between Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction in working toward completing the I-29 interchange.

7. Homelessness and affordable housing have been identified as problems in Grand Junction that affect large segments of our City's population; including young people, families and the elderly. What actions do you think the City should take to address these problems?

This is a complex problem that cannot be solved by the city acting alone. There will need to be strong partnerships with the private sector and the nonprofits that are already engaged in working to mitigate this issue. In addition, I would immediately take the following actions:

- A review of the development fee structure put in place in 2019 with the goal of creating a new framework that is fair to developers while encouraging creation of affordable/workforce housing stock
- Creation of a land bank by the city using existing American Recovery Plan dollars
- A rewrite of the City's current infill and redevelopment matrix for fee reductions/waivers to allow smaller projects to participate and to further encourage creation of affordable units
- Greater flexibility in the land use code to allow for creation of more starter homes that can be built at lower costs such as modular homes, condominiums, and town homes

8. Economic development is listed as one of Grand Junction's strategic priorities. According to the City's 2023 adopted budget summary, economic development spending will constitute 8% (\$19.5 million) of the total combined budget.

- a. What means would you utilize to evaluate the merit and effectiveness of the city's economic development strategy?"

First of all, it is important to quantify what is included in the \$19.5 million of spending as each may require a different matrix to determine effectiveness.

Approximately \$5.5 million is spending from the lodging tax to promote tourism. Evaluation of this expenditure would be based on visitation numbers and overall economic impact of those visitations.

Another \$6.5 million is expending on everything from operations of the Business Incubator, GJEP, and Chamber to CMU, DDA, infill incentive fund and Grand Valley Transit. At least annually the entities that receive funding must present a report to the City of how dollars were expended and what outcomes were achieved. It would be easy to say a common economic development matrix of jobs created, wages of those jobs and capital expenditures would be used. But economic development is a long-term effort and it would be unfair to use this matrix with most of those receiving these funds. The exception is the infill incentive fund which already has an identified matrix that includes location in an identified infill area, capital investment and number of affordable units.

Grand Junction Regional Air Service Alliance and the Grand Junction Sports Commission also receive about \$1.75 million. In the case of the Air Service Alliance effectiveness will be gauged on how successful they are in attracting more commercial air service options. In the case of the Grand Junction Sports Commission effectiveness will be gauged on the economic impact of creating more events and expanding the participation in current sporting events.

The remainder of \$19.5 million (about \$5.5 million) is used for Parks Capital Projects and I am not sure it belongs in the category of economic development funding.

- b. What steps would you take to determine that the level of funding for the city's economic development strategy is appropriate or should be increased or decreased?

Some of the levels of funding are already predetermined (through ballot measures, etc.) such as Visit GJ, Air Service Alliance, Sports Commission and DDA or based upon previous agreements such as the CMU classroom building.

For more discretionary ED funding, I would require regular updates on activity and levels of effectiveness based on economic indicators and actual accomplishments.

- c. If elected, how would you ensure that funding the city's economic development strategy is fair to new businesses, existing businesses, taxpayers who are not business owners, as well as well as pro-growth and no-growth interests?

As a longtime champion of existing business, I would advocate that any city incentive funds be available using a common matrix for new and existing primary job creators first. Other elements of the strategy such as the Infill Incentive need a clear matrix to insure fairness to any developer of any size.

I am a firm believe that in order to have a strong and vibrant community one must have a strong business community. A community cannot stand still...it is either growing or declining. Grand Junction has the One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan that provides a roadmap of how we can successfully grow in the future and as a City Council it is our responsibility to ensure the infrastructure is in place to accommodate that growth.

9. Are there City expenditures that you think could be reduced without sacrificing City residents' quality of life or fiscal responsibility? Are there City expenditures that you think should be increased?

This is a difficult question to answer because frankly the 2023 Grand Junction budget is only available through a series of about 50 links on the City Finance website right now (<https://www.gjcity.org/1104/Annual-Budget-Budget-Development>). I have asked for and will receive a briefing on the budget from the City Manager and the City Finance Officer but that meeting will not take place in time to meet the deadline for this survey.

One of my priorities is efficiency and transparency in managing city funds but in order to determine efficiency we must have transparency first. I have already begun advocating for the city to present a digital budget picture similar to the Mesa County online budget book. This online resource is simple for anyone to use and provides historical and current levels of funding by department.

10. What do you feel are three OTHER important issues and or concerns facing the City of Grand Junction and what solutions do you have in mind?

- I have a real concern about the city competing with the private sector. The recent purchase by city staff of a \$500,000 concrete paving machine and working to complete 9 miles of Riverfront trail without doing any apples-to-apples comparison on whether this was a cost-effective way to complete the project is disturbing. There are several steps to be taken to address this issue. The City Council needs to rewrite the purchasing policy to provide greater clarity and include a decision-making matrix for when the City self-performs work rather than bid it out. Secondly, the authority of the City Manager to make fleet purchases of up to \$500,000 needs to be repealed. No manager should have that level of authority without the oversight of elected officials. And finally, there needs to be a meaningful conversation between city officials and the private sector to identify and remove barriers to the bidding process for local companies.

- The recent city community satisfaction survey identified continuing to improve and build streets and roads as the citizens' number one priority. The capital improvements budget should prioritize streets and roads for city funding and Council oversight of the capital improvements plan process should be increased.
- The second priority identified in the community satisfaction survey was increased access to reliable, high-speed internet. While I do not believe the city should be in the high-speed internet business, I do believe that there are ways to incentive private providers to do more to meet this need of our residents and would engage in conversation with them.