



Restore the Balance - Delta County <rtbdeltacounty@gmail.com>

candidate questions

1 message

Bill <bill@paoniairon.com>
To: rtbdeltacounty@gmail.com

Thu, Feb 29, 2024 at 2:12 PM

From Bill Brunner.

Running for Paonia Trustee

AGE: 75

EDUCATION: Some college and a lifetime in private business as a contractor, employer making weekly payroll and metal worker.

FAMILY: 50 years married

PLEASE RETURN YOUR RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE NOT LATER THAN 5:00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024, BY EMAIL TO: rtbdeltacounty@gmail.com

To: Candidates for Municipal Office**Town of Paonia, Colorado**

1. What qualifications do you have that can give voters confidence that you should be a member of the Paonia Board of Trustees? Please be specific.

Served on the Paonia Board twice. Once in the 1990's and was elected again in 2016. I have lived in Paonia since the late 70's and have been a fascinated observer of the goings on at town hall. I am very aware of how easily the Town Council falls into a tribal mentality. It is my hope to move Paonia toward some much needed institutional integrity. It is respect for the process that draws the line between government of laws and government by whims.

2. By now, upon reading and considering 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 feel should guide political conduct in Western Colorado?

Yes, following your principals would be a good step.

- b. If you endorse them all, please explain how you will work to execute these principles.

By remaining nonpartisan, verifying information, seeking accountability and listening to all points of view.

- c. If there are any principles you do not endorse, please identify them and explain why.

I endorse all seven principals.

3. It is important to let people know that you put the public interest first. In looking back over the past year or two, are there any decisions of the Paonia Board of Trustees has made that you do not agree with?

Yes, the Board made many poor decisions that together have cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars while informed citizens sounded the alarm. In response the board steadily restricted public input. They hired an unqualified Town Administrator who was part of the office clique. They put her in a position where she was guaranteed to fail, and fail she did. She conspired with her long time coworkers to conceal many failings from the

board. She left a trail including hundreds of thousands of dollars of damage to the Town water and sewer systems, blatant violations of the citizen initiated water moratorium, and falsified data on the spring flow to the engineer trying to quantify the capacity of the water system. Her good friend, the bookkeeper, falsified the Town financial records and put Town money in unauthorized bank accounts the Town had no access to. Not once was there any acknowledgment of her incompetence or a word of reprimand. Three trustees resigned because they were ostracized for perusing answers to questions about town finances and viewing damage to facilities. If they had had support to answer their questions this fraud would have been unmasked years sooner. The bookkeeper walked out with a \$40,000 payout and a written promise that the town wouldn't say anything nasty about her. A temporary administrator reported the misdeeds with the finances broke laws. Now the books cannot be certified (audited) and DOLA has officially cut the Town off from any further grant money until the books are straightened out. No one on the Board seems to find any of this out of the ordinary.

If yes, how would you change them?

By seeking basic competence and accountability, hold regular reviews, always do a thorough search for talent before promoting untrained office staff to management positions. For example, the Board advertised stringent requirements with low pay when looking for a Clerk. When no good candidate appeared, they lowered the requirements, upped the salary and promoted an unqualified office employee without re-advertising the position with the lower requirements and higher pay.

4. In the aftermath of recent political events, some security experts cite increased risks to local governments from extremist groups which pose a threat to the right to peacefully assemble and to the proper functioning of government.

- a. How would you define "extremist" activity and do you view it as a threat to the proper function of municipal government?

Threats of violence, failure of a party to ostracize those who make threats and advocate violence. Blocking restrictions on guns, banning books. It is a threat to the continuance of civil society.

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

Armed "pole watchers" should be banned outright. There should be metal detectors in public buildings and more laws banning weapons in public places.

5. Our county allows the use of mail-in ballots. Do you feel this method serves the public interest?

Yes, Colorado has proven mail-in ballots are safe and effective ways to vote.

6. Do you feel municipal government in your Delta County community in the recent past has been moving in the correct direction?

No. The local government has all but eliminated meaningful public participation in town meetings, has failed to address pressing needs, and placed unwarranted trust in a number of employees who violated the trust placed in them. The board has promoted unnecessary projects that would add enough to the cost of living in Paonia to harm low income residents with taxes and fees the town will extract from them on pain of foreclosure of their homes. Gentrification may be inevitable but the town government doesn't need to be encouraging it while giving lip service to preservation of the "rural lifestyle" and "affordable housing". We need affordable communities.

- a. What additional steps would you promote to maximize serving the interests of your community in an efficient and cost-effective manner?

Encourage public participation at all levels of decision making. Also, actively seeking additional venues to engage and educate citizens about the functions of local government and why it matters.

7. What do you feel are three important issues and/or concerns facing the municipality in which you are seeking elected office and what solutions do you have in mind?

Once again Paonia has been bamboozled by the bookkeeper. Systems and safeguards for how money is handled that do not depend on the perceived honesty of the current employees need to be put in place. And we need a forensic audit. The town is not forthcoming with details of the accounting records and still refuses to ask for an investigation or public report. Until we know exactly what went wrong we are not going to fix things. The bookkeeper responsible for the latest betrayal was the next full time finance officer after the bookkeeper who stole \$650,000! We have not learned a thing.

The water moratorium is now more than four years old and nothing specific has been done to address it. We are uselessly waiting for the results of another study that has been delayed by the town's poor record keeping and falsified data . We don't need to wait for yet another study to tell us our water is a finite resource. We need to face that fact and decide if/how/how much we are going to share what we have.

The streets are a mess. Finding money to fix them is a big problem. I would start by having the town council meet an hour before every meeting to fill a pothole!

Thanks for your help in encouraging public participation in our election process.

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