

**FORT COLLINS BUSINESS COMMUNITY  
CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE  
2013 CITY COUNCIL ELECTION**

**Questionnaires are due back to [ahutchison@fcchamber.org](mailto:ahutchison@fcchamber.org)  
by 5pm. on February 28, 2013.**

**Please note that all questionnaire answers will be shared with the business  
community.**

Office Sought: Mayor	District (If Applicable):	
Name: Eric Sutherland		
Home Address: 3520 Golden Currant		
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Employment:		
Length of Residence: In City:	22 yrs	In District:

**Candidate Statement:** The Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce has shown a poor understanding of the way local governments can be effective in improving the economic health of our region.

The Rocky Mountain Innosphere, undoubtedly the worst corruption of public finance I have ever seen, was blindly supported by the Chamber. It is very little more than the wholesale transfer of millions of public dollars into private pockets. Local governments do not improve local economies by giving away buildings. The giveaway of the Innosphere, especially the pieces that were accomplished behind everyone's back, have done real damage. Pledging far more tax increment to the Innosphere than the building will ever generate has put the Urban Renewal Authority under water. The illegal loan that was made (a violation of our City Charter and state statute) absolutely paralyzes the URA's ability to provide meaningful benefits in the future.

As I fill out this questionnaire, our City Government is contemplating violating our City Charter and pledging the faith and credit of the City Government itself to bail out the URA. I doubt very much that we will get much of a public explanation of this action from the Chamber either.

David May, President of the Chamber, has refused to engage in this issue, preferring instead to watch millions of our tax dollars used to create private equity in a multi-million dollar real estate asset with no bindings to the public interest whatsoever. Any and all claims that the Innosphere has or will produce benefits that are proportional to the huge public subsidies pledged to the Innosphere (\$6 million) are

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speculative at best. At least we can take some solace in the fact that the Chamber is no longer running candidates for local office whose primary campaign theme is how 'business unfriendly' Fort Collins City Government is.

The trespass of the public trust that the Rocky Mountain Innosphere represents is only a small part of the problem. Taking a public dollar and getting \$1.05 in beneficial economic activity is not the easiest thing in the world to do. The Chamber has provided little to know direction about how to do this. Certainly, threatening a long standing business with condemnation (twice) and then retreating does nothing to improve our economic health and has given Fort Collins a huge black eye.

I am providing the responses to this questionnaire very reluctantly. I think anyone and everyone should know candidate's positions on the issues. But I also think an organization such as the Chamber owes the public a response or two when something like the Innosphere gets financed with millions of tax dollars with nothing to show for it. The Chamber has been completely unwilling to say word 1 about this corruption.

*Please limit responses to approximately 200 words per section.*

- (1) Education: BSME University of Washington 1986
- (2) Past and Present Community Service Including Offices Held:
  - Attended Fort Collins City Council meetings for last 5 years.
  - Attended Platte River Power Authority Board meetings last 3 years
  - Attended Larimer County Board of County Commissioners meetings last 1.5 years
- (3) Past and Present Employment/Business Experience:
  - 18 years mechanical and electrical engineering including design, manufacturing, sales & field work. Mostly small businesses and start-ups.
  - Owned and operated 3 different small businesses ranging from technical service work to product development of original invention/designs.
- (4) Current Employment and Responsibilities:
  - Family
  - Investments
  - Mayor of Fort Collins would be a full time job.

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(5) Specific Qualifications For This Office:

- Attended all but a handful of Fort Collins City Council meetings for last 5+ years. Have read all agendas and most agenda item summaries during this time. Watched approximately 75% of all City Council work sessions during this time.
- Attended all but two Platte River Power Authority Board of Directors meetings since September 2009. Lifelong student of the electric utilities industry.
- Attended multiple citizen advisory board meetings including Electric Board for 2 years (2007-2009).
- Attended, viewed and read minutes and agendas of Loveland, Longmont and Estes Park Council meetings for comparison/insight into Fort Collins City Government.
- Attended approximately half of all Larimer County County Commissioner's Administrative Matters meetings for last 2 years.

(6) Why Are You Running For This Office?

Fort Collins can do so much better than we are. Energy, transportation, solid waste .. you name it. The past two years have been characterized by a complete absence of accomplishment ... proof positive that a part time Mayor won't cut it for Fort Collins.

We need to start working immediately to ensure the successful operation of an expanded transit system that incorporates the MAX BRT. We need to make sure every dollar we are spending on energy efficiency improvements is doing something. We are spending \$30 million on smart meters yet no one has yet provided a plan for leveraging this investment into real world benefits....

The list is rather lengthy at this point. Fort Collins deserves proactive leadership from its elected leaders. We haven't had it.

(7) What have you done to prepare for election to this office and how you will you conduct yourself if elected to this office? What experiences have you had that makes you qualified to serve in office? On what City Boards and Commissions have you served?

I'm pretty sure I understand the mechanics of local government as well as anyone else in town. I don't know of many people who have put more time into studying the issues and the possibilities.

I am certain that I have stopped more mistakes than anyone else around. I know I have saved my fellow electric ratepayers over a million dollars just by ridding the practice of bottom feeding in the REC market. I would have saved much, much more ( i.e. smart meters) save for a chronic lack of effective leadership at City Hall.

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(8) If you are elected, what are the top three accomplishments you want to have completed by the end of your term and how will you get them done?

1) Restore trust and integrity to Fort Collins City Government.

Misinformation by City staff will not be tolerated. Between the situation with Lieutenant Jim Broderick and all the fabrications created to prop up the multi-million dollar giveaway of the Innosphere, Fort Collins has seen enough dishonesty. Zero tolerance is the only policy that works in this area.

2) Replace the general level of insincerity associated with ‘triple bottom line’, ‘budgeting for outcomes’ and all the MBA smart speak associated with so called economic action plans.

Real change requires real change. The propensity of City Government to engage in delusional navel gazing over the last several years is frightening. When people deal in the realm of real-world possibilities, great things can happen.

3) Bring the talents and energies of all of Fort Collins to bear on the challenges in front of us.

Our systems of decision making and public engagement can be radically improved by fairly straightforward changes in communications and process. The City organization exists to serve the needs of the citizens that live here. Amplifying their voices in policy discussions will ensure better outcomes.

I will hold weekly public meetings to hear from the citizens. I will set up electronic venues to make sure their thoughts and ideas – the good ones and the not so great ones – have a chance to be shared with the entire community.

(9) What do you think are the top 3 economic priorities the city government should undertake during the next four years? What role should the City of Fort Collins have in economic development? How will you make the economy a City budget priority?

The top priority for any local government never changes: Provide high quality services at an exceptionally good value to the people paying for them. (i.e. the taxpayers).

I am astounded at how this simple concept continually escapes the local ‘thought leaders’ in economic development. Even more astounded at how little else they have to say about how public resources should be applied to economic development activities.

The next step is pretty easy to comprehend as well. Our systems of taxation need

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to evolve. It is counter productive to tax investment in productivity by primary employers. We could improve the health of our economy by telegraphing our intent to evolve along a solid path to success. This is far preferable to continuing a herky-jerk model of rebates.

Beyond this basic concept, local governments can pursue public benefits by selectively and prudently applying perturbations to systems of taxation and financing public improvements to greet opportunities as they arise. Providing value to the taxpayers is the key.

- (10) How will you make Fort Collins a more Jobs Friendly community? Are you willing to engage with business leaders to discuss these solutions? Please explain how you will stay in touch with business leaders.

Oh dear! Are we ‘jobs unfriendly’?

I don’t look at this city this way. I don’t look at economics this way. The objective we are looking for – as a city and a society – is entraining resources, human and otherwise, toward the betterment of our quality of life and that of the next generation. Fort Collins City Government, in service of the people who pay for it, can do a lot to make that happen.

Am I willing to engage with business leaders? Let’s see here. Would I be working for business people along with all the other people who live here? Absolutely. That was a tough question.

As far as staying in touch, I would be the most accessible elected official Fort Collins has ever seen. I would wish to set up a weekly drop in meeting on Tuesdays. Sometime between the County Commisioners meetings in the morning and City Council meetings in the evening.

- (11) What role should the City of Fort Collins have in the region? What do you believe are the top issues facing Northern Colorado in the next several years?

I had a conversation with a County Commisioner the other day. He told me that in the 2 years that my opponent has been in office, he has approached her for collaboration twice. Both times, she was unwilling to get involved.

Over that two year time frame I have been to over 50 meetings that Larimer County officials were involved in. One of my sincerest disappointments has been Fort Collins parochialism and unwillingness to take leadership roles in important regional issues.

We have to develop strategies for sustainable transportation systems, sustainable

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energy infrastructure and the preservation of the high quality of life we enjoy for our children. That is going to take real leadership, not the imaginary stuff that is often spoken about at City Hall.

- (12) Colorado will continue to grow, including our area. How should the City Council plan for growth, if at all?

Step 1, take these loony projections of ‘demographers’ and file them where they belong. Projections for colonizing the moon appear to be as scientifically valid as the numbers we are seeing. What Northern Colorado evolves in to is up to Northern Colorado.

We need to evolve our development review process from a system that drives wedges to one that creates optimized outcomes.

Growth should not come at the expense of the people who live here.

There is a carrying capacity that the resources of this region will support. Exceeding that will create significant downsides for the people ( including myself) who wish to live here for a long time.

- (13) What are the top two issues facing city government over the next 4 years and why do you believe they are the most important?

Banning fracking and disposal of cardboard.

- (14) What economic tools should the City add to their "tool box" of resources to attract key employers?

I am happy to point to this very question as proof positive that the Chamber of Commerce just doesn’t get it. How many ‘key employers’ have been attracted to Fort Collins without putting a single scratch in any tool in the box? I can think of a few.

I think the Chamber needs to answer this question for us. It seems as though they want to compel people to think that it is necessary to do more than we are doing. Do we need, for example, to disadvantage the people who live and do business here to attract more people? I never found that to be an idea with much popular appeal. I think the opposite is true.

Fort Collins is not unique. This has happened all around the country for decades.

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As soon as someone is employed in 'economic development', they feel compelled to start goosing the system. The smart people, including the smart Chambers of Commerces, have discovered that evolving to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are far preferable to goosing. Unfortunately, too much rides on creating the perception of creating results rather than actually doing it.

- (15) In recent years, the City Council has been prone to push ahead on issues that are clearly not popular with the public. An example would be trash districting. Though public support was absent, the Council pressed forward with the results being significant negative response by the public and hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars spent on consultants and staff time. What would you do to ensure good governance and the prudent use of staff time and resources?

Can we get an update for the questionnaire by 2015 please? The PILOT trash district thing, although very regrettable, did happen a long time ago. It was an interesting question back in 2011.

These failures, and there are many of them, all stem from a lack of leadership at City Hall. I don't think things have changed much in the past 2 years. I'm running for Mayor to fix that.

- (16) The City of Fort Collins already has some of the most rigorous flood control regulations in the country but is proposing even stricter regulations. What is your position on the proposed changes to the Poudre River floodplain regulations?

Present regs are acceptable. Other issues in stormwater and flooding are more pressing.

- (17) The High Park Fire and drought showcased how vulnerable the City is to lack of water storage. What would you do to help the City be better prepared for water emergencies?

The first sentence in this question is not a true statement. The contamination to the water in the Poudre following the fire was an example of how vulnerable Fort Collins and a lot of other users are to massive water contamination. There is a lot of water storage in Lake Granby. We rely on that. It could also be contaminated by wildfire.

So, to begin with, let's start by framing the issues the right way and asking the

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right questions. I think there is a lot of discussion (Question 17 on this questionnaire included) that is counter productive.

Store all the water you want. Diversify. However, when we start talking about how water is used and who pays for it, a more sincere conversation needs to take place.

(18) What are the top three transportation improvements the City of Fort Collins should accomplish? What is your position on the potential renewal of the Pavement Management Sales Tax? Why?

1) Functional regional transit. 2) Functional local transit 3) Sustainable systems of finance to fund all transportation needs.

(19) Why would a business person support your election to office?

I'll make Fort Collins a better place to live and do business in.

(20) If business groups endorse you, is there any significant information that could come out about you during a campaign that could potentially embarrass you (and them) publicly? (ex: bankruptcy, arrest, conviction, etc.)

I have not told our current City Council a bunch of fibs the way others have. I would never dream of it.

I have not hatched a plan to give away millions of my fellow citizen's tax dollars. I'm feeling pretty good about my chances of reversing that wrongdoing and ensuring it never happens again.

I think business groups in town, including the Chamber ought to be doing a slightly better job of vetting the actions of city officials who are in office.

Eric Sutherland

Candidate for Mayor/ President of the Board of Commisioners of our insolvent URA