

## **CEDAR RAPIDS GAZETTE ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE JUNE 2008**

### **Occupation:**

Johnson County Supervisor

Former Business Manager and News Anchor for KCJJ Radio in Iowa City; Former Legislative Assistant to Senator Bob Dvorsky and Representative Richard Myers; Former employee of the Iowa Democrat Party

### **Education/Degrees:**

B-A '93 University of Iowa  
Double Major in Political Science and History

### **Civic Involvement:**

Iowa City Noon Rotary Club; Knights of Columbus; Eagles; Moose; Iowa City/Coralville Jaycees; Iowa City First United Methodist Church Mens Club

### **Endorsements:**

Iowa City Federation of Labor

### **Elected Offices Held:**

Johnson County Board of Supervisors, 2000; re-elected in 2004

### **Other Government Service:**

National Association of Counties Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee and National Water Quality Sub-Committee; Iowa State Association of Counties Public Safety Committee; State of Iowa County Rate Information System (CRIS) Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Funding Policy Board of Directors; Governor Appointed Iowa Access Technology Advisory Council

### **What is your Number 1 campaign issue?**

Justice Center: Dealing with inadequate space and safety needs for the Jail and Courthouse has been quite a challenge not only for County and State of Iowa employees and the public, but also in its impact on our budget. Over the past several years, we have created a community-driven study of space, location, costs, treatments and alternatives for our overcrowded Jail and Courthouse including the creation of a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee.

### **What is your Number 2 campaign issue?**

Environment and cleaning our waterways: This a pivotal time in our county's history. The Iowa River through Johnson County has been identified as one of the most endangered and polluted rivers in the United States. Our roads are overcrowded, our communities are growing too fast to keep up with infrastructure and our policies are encouraging sprawl. As the only policy maker from the State of Iowa to serve on the National Association of Counties Environment, Energy and Land Use Committee, I will make Green Environmental Initiatives a top strategic priority. The time to act is now to educate our citizenry in creating a more sustainable future and supporting efforts to protect our environment for many generations to come. Goals include:

- Build a Green Team of experts to implement water quality programs and incentives, identify renewable and alternative energy initiatives, address climate change and air quality issues, promote locally grown foods and follow through on goals established by the Cool Counties Initiative
- Develop better land use policies including efforts to scrap the North Corridor Phasing Plan which currently calls for rezoning massive acres of agricultural land into residential property
- Support a Scenic Roads Plan to allow roads to be improved without devastating effects on the environment and character of the area

- Create a Metro Transportation Plan to promote busing, trains, car pooling, biking and walking
- Establish better relationships with city, county, state and federal officials to incorporate smart growth and sustainable principles

### **What is your Number 3 campaign issue?**

Continue long-range strategic planning to address critical county government infrastructure needs: Complete the Health and Human Services Building and County Campus Plan, Joint Communications and Dispatch Center, SEATS-Secondary Roads Office and Maintenance Facility, Administration Building remodeling project, Conservation Office and Maintenance Facility, and get community buy-in to design and complete a new Justice Center

### **What do you think the biggest issue is facing your county and how would you address it?**

Space and Safety needs in the Jail and Courthouse. Building on what was said above, to create a justice center, I propose to:

- Complete our Space and Location Analysis Study that is currently underway and bring a comprehensive study for full review in front of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee and the community.
- Start the process of getting community buy-in as to how big a facility we should plan, what should be included in the facility (including operational expenses) and where that facility should be located.
- Work with law enforcement, judges, and local government officials to find additional ways to reduce arrest rates within our community and continue efforts to expand our award winning jail treatment and alternative programs.
- Have a realistic discussion about costs. In fact, I announced recently that no new justice center should be built until this community has a frank discussion about taxes. It is time we held a tax summit between all taxing entities within our county, including city and school government leaders. I propose beginning in 2009 that we all agree to a tax moratorium on any new bonding or sales tax initiatives for a five year period so we can tackle this jail and courthouse initiative head on.

### **If elected, what would be your three top priorities?**

1. Build a new Justice Center
2. Create policies and incentives to clean Johnson County creeks, rivers, lakes and other waterways.
3. Hold 200 more Government and You Listening Posts. I have held over 375 listening posts since taking office and look forward to holding 200 more.

### **If you are forced to cut your budget, where would you look for savings? If you have money to spend, where do you think you should look at spending it?**

Cuts: I would ask our departments and fellow elected officials to find cuts in their non-mandated requirements. In addition to what we are already doing, I would call for increased measures to enhance revenues and diversify funding streams. I would also look to retirement incentives. Spending: I would continue to pay down debt, start saving for costs associated with a new Justice Center, and look to add road infrastructure projects and intergovernmental cost sharing.

### **How do you see county governments working with city governments within your county? Are there efficiencies to be achieved with intergovernmental agreements?**

There are positive relationships between Johnson County and our area city governments. Good examples include the Joint Communications and Dispatch Center, Oakdale Boulevard Extension, Public Safety Mutual Aid and Land use Fringe Area Agreements, though more works needs to be

done to get communities to agree to and identify growth areas for cities. Other examples of intergovernmental cooperation include the SEATS Program, Iowa City Area Development (ICAD), the Johnson County Council of Governments and the East Central Iowa Council of Governments, Trails Advisory Committee planning, the Joint Cities, County and School District meetings, Joint Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce Trips to Washington DC and Des Moines and the Johnson Linn Leadership Summit. More efficiency can be created by looking into joint purchasing of products, vehicles, fuel, and health insurance to name a few. In addition, a green team of area leadership needs to be created to find ways to reduce pollution.

### **What do you think the state should do in the way of property tax reform?**

Bring together leaders in agriculture, local government and the business community and have them agree on a plan to find a fairer way to assess the values of property and buildings. Give local government more control on spending caps determined by the state.

### **Do you think counties play a role in economic development and, if yes, how would you describe it?**

In 2004, Johnson County created an Economic Development Plan. That plan now identifies key intersections where commercial development should occur, without major impact on our natural resources. Examples include the Kalona Cheese Factory site on 540<sup>th</sup> Street and Highway One and the Oxford or Herbert Hoover Highway Interchanges at Interstate 80. Our county now must be willing to show leadership and work with developers to invest in road infrastructure in many of these areas. We also have to be realistic that most commercial development will and should continue to occur within cities where there is more enhanced infrastructure including water, sewer and utilities. I am hopeful that if I am re-elected, I will move the county forward in creating an Economic Development Committee that will help guide our county to identify which areas should be first to see newly created economic development. We must also be willing to continue to invest and attend Iowa City Area Development (ICAD) and Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce meetings, and join them in their efforts to attract businesses to our area. Economic Development in the county also means more residential housing. With good planning and use of Johnson County's Land Use Plan, we are finding a balance between economic development and preservation of natural resources. Good Development and growth is planned, has reasonable regulations, has intergovernmental cooperation, and understands that if we want to be able to provide quality services, including public safety and human services, than we must continue to allow growth and infill to occur.

### **Do you think the county should increase spending on rural road maintenance?**

Johnson County continues to increase funds to address rural road upgrades and maintenance. The problem is keeping up with projects when costs for fuel, vehicles and construction are escalating beyond our spending limitations while at the same time we try to keep our Rural Tax Fund lower than any other budgetary fund. Add severe weather, overtime and sand/salt and gravel costs and you have a very tough budget situation. Since about 2003, the County also continues to fix roads that were once owned by the State and then dumped onto the County. Known as Transfer of Jurisdiction or TJ projects, these include Highways 382, Old 218 and 965 as well as Herbert Hoover Highway. The cost to fix these roads has now, in essence, put a delay on road upgrades to projects that were on the list to be fixed. To address these issues, Johnson County has made Rural Road Infrastructure a top strategic priority in our Five Year Strategic Plan. In addition, in 2007, for the first time in our history, Johnson County created the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). This money is now being used to plan for upgrades to both gravel and dirt surfaces. Because of spending limitations, I see the county looking to close certain dirt or Level B roads and giving them to landowners. I also see the county becoming more flexible in allowing residents to individually pay for upgrades in front of their homes.

**Do you think efficiencies can be achieved in combining some county elected offices like recorder and auditor, for example?**

I do not support combining elected officials. However, Johnson County has already created efficiencies within our departments and elected officials. These include efforts to have one central Human Resources Department and one central Information Services Department. I would like to see additional ways for conglomeration including the creation of a finance department, of a mapping department and more cross training of employees that could move from one elected official or department during peak times of mandated requirements.

**Is there a way to get more money to devote to county roads and bridges?**

Get the State of Iowa to give growing counties, like Johnson County, more of the dollars our taxpayers give them to invest in roads and bridges, and stop the State from passing on their old and dilapidated roads and bridges onto County governments and requiring us to take them. Other options include having our Federal and State lawmakers make it a higher priority to spend dollars and pass those dollars down to county governments to help pay for roads and bridges. We could also look to increase the local rural tax base to its full capacity.

**Do you think the county compensation board process should be revised?**

Currently all the persons on the committee are appointed by the elected officials that receive the recommendation. I think the current system should include a representative appointed by both the county seat city and the largest school board of a county; this would allow for some additional perspective.

**Should local officials be allowed to decide locations for large livestock operations or should siting approval remain with the state?**

No agreement for a large livestock operation should be allowed unless it has approval from both the local government and the State of Iowa.