

Responses from: Owen Freiburger, Candidate for Commissioner, Salina City Commission

1. What is Salina's greatest asset? Greatest Need? How can "working people" be actually involved?

Salina has a number of assets, but the fact that its location is at the crossroads of two major highways is probably its greatest. I firmly believe that the physical location of our city makes it a viable place for future growth and additional economic success.

This benefit of location goes hand in hand with Salina's greatest need: additional employment opportunities for workers of all skill and wage levels. I also feel that the opportunity exists for strong growth in both the job market and overall wage level of employed workers due to the central location of Salina.

The classification of "working people" is difficult to define in a rural, agricultural community. Many people work in a variety of ways that would classify them as workers, but not in the traditional sense of "nine to five" employment. As time is always a consideration for today's busy individuals and families, an effort must be made by all to identify those issues which are deemed important and worthwhile, and an additional effort made to become a part of the process by which change is effected.

2. Salina has a reputation for paying low wages. If elected, will you promote this or try to change this? Please elaborate.

It is unfortunate that our citizens continue to struggle to find employment that offers liveable wages. Inadequate wage levels do not benefit a community or make it attractive or sustainable. If elected, I will do everything possible to try to change this. Besides continuing to plan for a City that is more attractive to new businesses (thereby bring a larger job base to the city) I would also urge greater city partnership with present economic development organizations, college and university efforts and private business interests that work towards the creation of a City which is better able to recruit new employers, align itself to the issues of "working people," and collectively collaborate on plans to address job growth and income equality.

3. If the City gives more than nominal dollars to an organization, should that organization's meetings be open for the public to attend?

Transparency is a key issue for me as a candidate for City Commissioner. As past Chairman of the Salina Planning Commission, liaison to the Zoning Board of Appeals and current Vice Chair of the Planning Commission, I have participated in ongoing study sessions,

discussions and open public forums about various issues brought forth in the past three years.

It is vital, that we, as a community, continue to engage and involve everyone when making decisions that affect the whole, especially in venues and meetings where funding has been allocated by the City of Salina.

4. Where do you stand on the City's funding of both the Salina Community Economic Development Organization and the Chamber of Commerce? If elected, what, if any changes would you make?

Both the Salina Community Economic Development Organization and the Chamber of Commerce serve an important role in the representation and promotion of Salina. It is highly appropriate for the City to continue funding these organizations *if* both are significantly aligned to both public *and* private interests. The SCEDO is more attuned to overall promotion, in my opinion. As a progressive city, a constant effort and quality outreach must be made that presents Salina as a more attractive option than other places. The Chamber of Commerce is heavily funded by private businesses and corporations as well as the city, and must continue to strive to involve those who are *not* members, as their voices represent the range of "working people" who fill jobs and make possible the successes of such businesses. The funding of both organizations has been debated in each Kansas town and city that I've been a resident of. I continue to believe these organizations are valid. However, I do need to see a tangible result from both organizations that validates their funding levels by the City of Salina.

5. The City Commission ultimately makes decisions that impact the City's 470 full-time and 10 part-time employees. How will you include these employees in decision making?

City of Salina employees make possible the day-to-day operation of Salina. In addition, a large number of city employees work towards the future--studying, planning, implementing and creating programming that will better suit a changing demographic to come. It is extremely important that the process includes the voice of city employees and is cognizant of the needs and expectations of those who work in employed and appointed positions. Engagement is necessary. Information must be available about the possible effects of City Commission decisions. A welcoming, non-threatening policy at city meetings and study sessions must be adhered to. I would urge a greater use of task forces and committees in order to strategically identify relevant issues.

I am always impressed with the level of professionalism and conduct I experience from

City employees in Salina. As a Planning Commissioner, I have attempted, in my own way, to give credit where due and ask for input from those who actually participate in the work, as to what changes should, or could, be made to better involve employees in decision making.

6. What is your opinion on commissioners being elected by district and why? If elected by district, who should draw the district lines?

Overall, I do not think that small communities (with tightly self-drawn boundaries) are successful in attempting to elect commissioners by district. Though the population may be diverse, socio-economic factors can intervene, making it difficult to adequately and fairly cross-represent the entire population. Salina has areas which reflect great prosperity as well as areas that show a need for revitalization. I strongly feel that bias and special interest interferes in the process when district lines are drawn and isolated bodies work independently of the whole. It is quite natural for people to be in tune most to those issues that they most identify with--often the issues most close to them in terms of proximity. The elimination of districts assists citizens and constituents in being more aware of the struggles and needs of all. In the event the City of Salina determined that district lines were an acceptable method for the election of City Commissioners, then it would be necessary to assure that these lines were to be drawn fairly and equitably, and that diverse economic and social factors were carefully taken into consideration to allow for fair representation.

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