

2007 LeftinLowell.com Lowell City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Attach additional pages as needed. If a question is reader-contributed, it is noted in parenthesis.

Responses from candidate Kevin Broderick

General Questions

1. Identify the specific sections of the city that you believe require special concentration of the city's efforts. What are the issues unique to those neighborhoods and what specifically do you propose to correct them?

Every neighborhood requires improvement. The implementation of a capitol improvement plan that will repair sidewalks and streets in all of our neighborhoods combined with continued improvements to our zoning code will work to see that we maintain the unique character of the individual neighborhoods. Another issue being addressed is code enforcement. We need to improve our enforcement, which may require hiring more code enforcement personnel. Improvements in public safety are being realized as Chief Lavallee continues to coordinate resources with the federal and state authorities as well as the sheriff's department.

2. A lot of talk circulates about the "direction" of the city. If you agree, define that "direction". Are you satisfied with it or would you take it in a different direction? If different, how and where?

I agree, I was part of the majority of the City Council that made the change to bring in professional city management and made the motion to extend the manager's contract to ensure he stays and continues to run the city as a business. We have achieved much but we still have much to accomplish in order to move the city forward in a positive direction.

3. Do you feel that property taxes are high? If so, how would you start the process of lowering them?

Comparatively speaking I would not say they are high. However, I understand and agree with resident's concerns that the process be equitable and that property be fairly assessed so that everyone is paying their fair share. Lowering taxes is difficult we have increasing costs over which we have no control, utilities, insurance and other fixed costs however, we have started the process of stabilizing taxes by making cuts and reorganization in an attempt to continue to provide the needed services to residents in a more efficient and less costly manner.

4. There is still a lot of discussion regarding the dismissal process of the previous City Manager. What is your opinion of the course of events that took place in April 2006?

In short I believed it was time for change, I certainly do not agree there was any type ambush as some claim. Most people involved problems and difficulties mounting and knew a change was coming to deal with them. I was not privy to the private meeting held with the

former city manager but my understanding is that the process was basically the same as had occurred with prior city managers when the majority wanted a change.

5, What do you think of City Manager Bernie Lynch's leadership of the City? Name specific strengths or weaknesses. (Anonymous)

I think Manager Lynch has done an outstanding job leading the city out of very difficult financial problem, dealing with the State's Department of Revenue and our Bond counsel to deal with many unanticipated financial problems left for him by the prior administration. He has shown tremendous knowledge as well as courage and integrity. Many of the decisions that have been made were very difficult and have been brought tremendous opposition by those they were effecting, yet he held his ground and did what he thought was best for the residents under political pressure. He has made himself available and sparked renewed interest and participation from the Lowell Plan and helped strengthen the private public partnership which is a major component in Lowell's continued growth.

Going forward I would like to see the Manager communicate better with the state delegation. Simply keeping them informed as to what the City is planning and major decisions being made. The Delegation is another key component to Lowell's growth and continued success.

Budget

6. Do you think the city of Lowell funds its public schools adequately? (Explain why or why not, and what, if anything, you would do about it.)

Yes, I believe we funded the schools as best we could in an extremely difficult financial situation. We were dealing with a 6.3 million dollar deficit and making many cuts on the city side of the budget. I would like to see the city improve it's funding as we continue to get our finances in order. It is difficult as we rely on so much State aid. However, as we build our reserves and continue to control our spending we can develop ad plan for future funding for education.

7. What are your thoughts on the City's union contracts? Are they out of line? Would you commit to rejecting contracts that burden future generations? (Eleanor Rigby and Right in Lowell)

I certainly would not support any contracts that will jeopardize the future generations of the City. I believe the negotiations are in progress and Manaer Lynch is knowledgeable and experienced in negotiating and will do his best to represent the best interests of the taxpayer's at the bargaining table.

8. What do you see as our options and what do you recommend with regard to improving our bond rating and our reserves? (Mr. Lynne)

I believe we are on the right track now. We need to continue to control spending, monitor and try to expand on our revenue sources (particularly our commercial and retail base), rebuild our reserves and implement a capital improvement plan for maintenance of the City assets. This is the current plan and we need to continue to take some tough votes and follow thru in order to improve our bond rating and move our City forward.

9. What is your target percentage increase in the tax rate for the upcoming FY2009 budget, and what are the primary actions required to achieve that? (waittlnextyr)

I would like to keep tax increases at or below 2/ ½ %. This is less than half the average increase in recent history. As important in setting the tax levy amount and increase in taxes is that we continue to fund the budget with realized revenue and NOT use free cash to prepare or fund our budget. Again, in moving forward we must control spending, look for ways to make government more efficient through the use of technology and expand our revenue base as described above.

Economic Development

10. The city owns several buildings which are long vacant, in poor condition, and blighting influences in their neighborhoods, such as the building behind the playground on West Sixth Street and the Butler School on Gorham Street. The City has allowed these buildings to stand vacant for years, in the hope of renovating them for public uses sometime in the future, but has not been able to secure the funds to do so. Should the City continue to maintain the buildings as they are, or sell them on the private market? (joe)

We are in the process of developing a plan on how to be t to deal with these properties and others like them across the City. Options to consider include; selling the properties to private entities for redevelopment that fits Lowell's Master Plan or redevelopment by the City for City use. In either case the city must take action to correct/improve these buildings which will also help improve our neighborhoods.

11. What do you plan to do to facilitate development at Massachusetts Mills and the old Post Office garage sites? (waittlnextyr)

Mass Mills is currently looking into improving their property and the council can help coordinate this with the potential expansion of the river walk, assisting in coordinating the federal and state funding necessary to incorporate Mass Mills redevelopment into those plans. The council can continue to rework the zoning code to assist in the dredvolpment of these important parcels to achieve their best use. Unfortunately much of this is dependant on the economy and an owner's/developer's willingness to proceed with a project.

12. What else can we do to support the growth/recruitment and retention of more artists in the city? (Jason)

Include this important segment in our marketing effort. As chairman of the Marketing Subcommittee I will continue to look for ways in which we can expand our marketing and have a more coordinated effort within the City. This includes the major venues and organizations in an effort to attract more visitors/buyers for the many artists. I think this will create a better market for them and will facilitate the growth and retention of our cultural base.

13. How can better use be made of the Connector Corridor and its access to the highway system? (Jason)

We need to update the master plan for the Tanner Street corridor. I recently brought this motion forward and the administration is reviewing our existin plan to update for the Lowes and Target expansions. It will likely include major infrastructure improvements/updates which will require funds but we need to plan and prepare as we did for the Acre and JAM areas.

Infrastructure

14. What do you consider the most pressing traffic bottlenecks in the city, and what would you propose to alleviate them? (waittlnextyr)

I would say we have many traffic issues in the City as all Cities out size. The most significant bottlenecks occur at the bridges. We will be building a new bridge which will hopefully relieve some bottlenecking. The Rourke bridge has been a 25 year temporary bridge which if replaced could relieve some of the bottlenecking. It is a difficult traffic issue that we should continue to look at ways of improving.

15. What would you propose to stop daily firehouse closings? It has been 15 years with no reasonable solution that protects all neighborhoods safely, fairly and equally. (Jason)

In order to prevent daily firehouse closings we need continued sound fiscal policy so that we can plan for more funding. I think we should strive to improve our all of our services; including fire, police and municipal services. I would also look to recommendations from the Chief Pitta as to how we might be able to provide more services without increasing costs, similar to what Chief Lavallee has done in the Police Department.

Residents of Lowell

16. Do you think Lowell's long term viability is helped or harmed by being a gateway city for immigrants? Conversely, is the prospect of gentrification a subject of concern? (*Jason*)

I think it is a fact that we will always have a turnover of our population. What is important is how we reach out to educate involve these people to engage them in the community to be productive participants.

17. Because Congress has not passed any immigration reform measures, cities around the country have begun passing their own regulations. Would you consider measures related to undocumented immigrants, and if so, would you be in favor of measures intended to shelter undocumented immigrants from the current anti-immigrant climate or measures intended to force them out of our city? (*Victoria*)

I would wait for the Federal Government to legislate this issue before attempting to pass any local regulations.

About You, the Candidate

18. How do you keep up with local or regional news? A television program? Radio program? Newspaper? Magazine? Blogs? Talking with members of the community? Which programs or print media do you read? How frequently do you do this? How accurate or inaccurate do you rate these sources? (*TooJohn*)

I get much of my local news from members of the community such as residents and business owners. I also try to read local and regional newspapers and local blogs online. I find each source has its own filter depending on their position and the more information I can get on a given subject the better informed I will be.

19. Could you name one or two current elected officials - at any level of government - that you admire and why? (*TooJohn*)

I admire most elected officials. Anyone who puts their name on the ballot deserves credit and it takes a tremendous amount of time to serve in even a local capacity.

20. What specifically do you hope to accomplish as a councilor? (*Anonymous*)

First and most important is the continuation of professional management. I hope to bring some much needed unity back to the council so that we can work toward the common goal of moving Lowell forward. This will require continued sound fiscal policy to accomplish the following goals: stabilize our tax rate; increase our bond rating; bring more jobs to Lowell and continue to improve public safety and education. These goals are intertwined and as we improve each specific goal we will see much improvement to our overall big picture.