

**FORT COLLINS BUSINESS COMMUNITY
CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
2016 COUNTY COMMISSIONER ELECTION**

**Questionnaires are due back to ahutchison@fchamber.org
by 5pm on Friday, September 9, 2016.**

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

Office Sought: County Commissioner	District (If Applicable): 2
Name: Steve Johnson	
Home Address: 5928 Lake View Drive	
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Fax: 970-498-7006	Email: repsjohnso@comcast.net
Employment: Larimer County	
Length of Residence: In County: 38 years	In District: 30 yrs

Please limit responses to approximately 200 words per section.

- (1) **Education:** Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine 1986 CSU, Bachelor of Science, Chemistry minor in Political Science, CSU, Graduate of the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University 1997. Arapahoe High School, Littleton, Colorado.
- (2) **Past and Present Community Service Including Offices Held:** County Commissioner, District 2 2009-present; Appointed by Governor to the State Board of Human Services, State Senate District 15, 2003-2009, Joint Budget Committee 2007-9, Assistant Minority Leader 2005-6; State Representative, District 49, 1997-2003, Majority Caucus Chair; Larimer County Planning Commission, including Chair, 1988-1997; Past Chairman of the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area Review Board; Chairman of United Way of Loveland, Berthoud and Estes Park; member of the Board of Directors of the Loveland Chamber of Commerce; past Chairman of the Larimer County Republican Party.
- (3) **Past and Present Employment/Business Experience:** Larimer County Commissioner, 2009-present; Instructor CSU Chemistry Department 2006-8, High School Teacher, Heritage Christian High School 2001-5; Owner Allard Animal Hospital in Loveland 1991-2003; practicing small animal veterinarian in Loveland 1986-2003.

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- (4) Current Employment and Responsibilities: As current County Commissioner for District 2 I represent all of the citizens of Larimer County on the Commission, set priorities and policy direction for the County Government, adopt a \$390 Million budget, and set salary increases and employee policies for approximately 1600 employees, managed through the County Manager.
- (5) Specific Qualifications For This Office: Forty year residency in Larimer County, past volunteer service in and familiarity with the community, past county boards and commission volunteer service, twelve years of experience in the Colorado Legislature, eight years experience as County Commissioner.
- (6) Why are you running for this office? I believe county government has an important role in shaping the quality of life in our community. I chose to live here because it is a great place to live, and I want to enhance that quality of life for future generations. I ran a business in Loveland for almost 16 years. I know what it takes to create jobs. My combination of past legislative and community experience uniquely qualifies me to be an effective representative of the citizens of Larimer County on the Commission. I love people and policy. I enjoy solving problems and find helping people to be very rewarding. I understand the proper role and responsibilities of county government in Colorado.
- (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? See the above answers on past community service, employment, and why I'm running for office. Given my past 20 years of public service, I suspect most readers know of my service, ability to work with all sides, and accomplish significant policy solutions.
- (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. Opening a mental and behavioral health facility to meet the gaps in healthcare in these areas identified

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in the just-completed study through a ballot measure approved by the voters in November, 2016. 2. Regional agreement on the location and manner of operation of the next Larimer County landfill which will be needed in about 10 years. 3. To leave Larimer County in better fiscal condition than we found it. We are well on our way towards doing this with reserves being more than doubled after this board's eight years in office despite the two worst natural disasters in county history. 4. The opening of a County offices building in Loveland.

- (9) What do you think are the top 3 economic priorities the county government should undertake during the next four years? What role should Larimer County have in economic development? How will you make the economy a County budget priority? Almost everything in the county budget affects the infrastructure and quality of life in the county. These are all things that go into making this a good place to live, work, and raise a family. We have a significant role to play in assisting established local businesses in thriving and expanding and attracting new businesses and primary jobs to the area. This board has significantly expanded support of the Small Business Development Center which has assisted hundreds of local businesses. Our support of the Colorado Procurement Technical Assistance Program has allowed for expanded hours in the county assisting local firms in doing business with the state and federal government. This board has established criteria and targeted employment areas for business personal property tax incentive agreements. Most recently we have worked with Loveland for agreements to enable Hach Company to expand significantly in Loveland. This board has increased the Economic Development staff in our Workforce Center. A major project of this staff has been to work with the Economic Alliance to establish what the county's role will be vis a vis the Alliance in the Post-NCEDC world. Overarching all of this is our duty and responsibility to provide the infrastructure and playing field for vibrant businesses in the county. Our collaborative work with local municipalities in reaching an historic agreement for funding improvements on I-25 is one example of that work. If forced to pick three priorities, I would say workforce housing, transportation, and the work we do matching employers and employees through the Workforce Center and the Workforce Development Board are the most important activities we are engaged in.
- (10) How will you make Larimer County 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. Much of this has been

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addressed in the previous question except for how to maintain communications. I am the liaison to the Workforce Development Board, a board of volunteer community and business leaders that advises our Workforce Center on how to be most effective for them.

Commissioner Gaiter is the liaison to the North Fort Collins Business Association and reports regularly to the board on their monthly meetings. I, and all Commissioners, are readily accessible to any businessmen and women to wish to discuss county issues. We look to appoint business leaders to our boards and commissions that advise us on a number of issues. By staying active and in touch with the community, we hear concerns. We all Chamber legislative committee meetings when asked and special community forums such as recent ones on health care that are sponsored by business organizations.

(11) What role should Larimer County have in the region? What do you believe are the top issues facing Northern Colorado in the next several years? Wow.

This is a much more involved question than can be answered here, and in a survey of this great length, I invite anyone who wants to dialogue more on this or any question to contact me directly. But briefly, Larimer County has the leading role in several areas in the region. Public safety, including disaster response and recovery, and Public Health are key responsibilities that we exercise in both cities and unincorporated areas. We should also have a collaborative role with our local government partners, and this is one of the 7 goals in our Strategic Plan that we are mid-way through. A good example is the leadership role the county took in brokering the historic funding agreement for I-25 improvements. Economic Development leaders often point out to us that the county is uniquely positioned to be a convener in Economic Development issues, as we can support all areas equally. I believe the top challenges for us in the future will be accommodating growth and the demand for services, the need for a jail expansion, changing demographics in the area and its effect on services such as a growing senior population, the cost and availability to housing especially workforce housing, and finally state budget issues and the ability to fund higher education and transportation for just two examples is a concern.

(12) Colorado will continue to grow, including our area. How should Larimer County plan for growth, if at all? I've live here for four decades and I've seen this area

grow tremendously. I've been through recessions and periods of rapid growth that bring out cries of "no growth." All in all, we've maintained this as a great place to live, in fact, I'd say its even better than when I first moved here. There are more parks, open space, recreation opportunities, greater arts and cultural options too. We are going to grow. Trying to stop growth only causes market distortions and other problems. Land use planning is a big part of it. Transportation planning is too. There isn't one silver bullet answer. Maintaining the services the county is responsible for to serve the citizenry is important. Public safety needs increase as more people move in. Recent challenges with homeless and transients are one

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example. Parks and open space are very desired by residents. Working collaboratively with other local governments is so important as resources become tight and demands increase and the need to do more with less requires greater efficiencies.

(13) What are the top two issues facing county government over the next 4 years and why do you believe they are the most important? I think question 11 and others answer this. But let me take this in a different but equally important directions. I'd say citizens confidence in government and more effective communication with citizens. Too many people don't know what county government does and that's largely our fault for not "telling our story" as we put it. We are working on a number of ways to better accomplish this. It relates to citizen's confidence in government. At a time when confidence in the national government is at perhaps record lows in recent times, the good support we enjoy from our citizens is even more important. Our government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. We can accomplish much less in our community should we ever lose that. Especially in Colorado, where tax policy requires the support and ultimately the vote of the citizens, this is so important.

(14) What economic tools should the County add to their "tool box" of resources to attract key employers? I don't see the need to change the statutes on county incentives at this time. We aren't in a position to get employers with bidding wars against states like Texas. We are much better off working on those other things that attract employers here. An educated workforce, good healthcare, great schools and higher education, good transportation systems, excellent healthcare, outdoor recreation and a clean environment. I have supported recent efforts in the legislature to give counties the opportunity to "business parks" with tax increment authority in the counties for specific primary job industries, but these were not successful. Our best use of resources is in working in collaboration with other local governments and entities like the Alliance in promoting Northern Colorado.

(15) What are the top three transportation improvements Larimer County should accomplish? What is your position on the Fix North I-25 effort? Why? 1.

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Expanding I-25 to six lanes from Highway 66 all the way to Colo. 14. I supported the historic agreement to fund expansion to Colo 402 and I'll keep working for the next phase. 2. Owl Canyon needs to be paved and widened from I-25 to US Hwy 287. This is a major truck bypass route and is seeing dramatically increased traffic. 3. For a non-road and bridge area, I'd say senior transportation in the unincorporated areas. Fairly good transportation options exist for seniors in the municipalities, but are lacking in many unincorporated areas and between the cities. With major healthcare facilities like MCR of the Rockies being located where they are, senior transportation is a growing concern.

- (16) The Larimer County Landfill is nearing the end of its viable life. What should we be doing to prepare for our waste stream future? We should be doing exactly what we are doing right now. For over a year, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of staff from Fort Collins, Loveland, Estes Park, and the County have been meeting to discuss and develop options for a future landfill which is projected to be needed in ten years. Just last year, Larimer County convened a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) to work alongside the TAC. We have held one community forum last year, and several more are scheduled for this month around the county. A timeline for the project has been developed by the PAC and TAC. I serve on the PAC along with Mayor Wade Troxell and Councilman Ross Cunniff of Fort Collins, Councilor Leah Johnson of Loveland, and Mayor Pro-Tem Wendy Koenig of Estes Park. This is a very important decision for the future of our county that will affect us for generations. There are significant cost and rate issues, as we know requirements for a new landfill will be significantly greater than those on our current facility. This is also a huge opportunity to evaluate newer technologies involving recycling, composting, waste to energy, and others. Significant public involvement is required.
- (17) An effort to create universal health care is on the state ballot this year (Amendment 69). What is your position on the issue and why? I'm opposed. This has zero chance of passing. Its a huge tax increase that would create a great economic upheaval in our state. Almost no public education or involvement has been done. It would create significant problems for one state to adopt such a system alone.
- (18) Why would a business person support your election to office? My past record of accomplishments in office for the past twenty years. This board has improved the fiscal condition of county government, doubling the reserves, lowering the property tax mill

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levy, a sales tax rate that is 80% of when we took office, ending a sales tax six months early in July 2012 all the while providing improved county services and coordinating a hugely successful recovery from the two worst natural disasters to hit in recorded history. My business background running a successful business in Loveland for 16 years. My ability to listen, learn, and be responsive to a diverse constituency. Finally, I was voted the Colorado County Commissioner of the Year by Colorado Counties, Inc., the state-wide organization of County Commissioners in Colorado.

- (19) 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.) No.

steve johnson
Signature

9/5/2016
Date