

**FORT COLLINS BUSINESS COMMUNITY
CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
2017 CITY COUNCIL ELECTION**

**Questionnaires are due back to ahutchison@fcchamber.org
by 5pm on January 16, 2017.**

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

Office Sought: Council Member	District (If Applicable): 3
Name: Gordon Coombes	
Home Address: 1125 Canvasback Dr. Fort Collins CO. 80525	
Daytime Phone:970-286-8003	Evening Phone:970-286-8003
Fax:	Email: gordon@coombes4council.com
Employment: TEAM Wellness & Prevention Executive Director	
Length of Residence: In City: 25 years In District: 10 years	

Please limit responses to approximately 200 words per section.

(1) Education:

Bachelor of Science- Columbia Southern University
Attended Colorado State University from 1992 to 1996
Peace Officer Academy- Aims Community College

(2) Past and Present Community Service Including Offices Held:

Larimer County Health Dept. Communities that Care Key Leader Board 2016 to present; City of Fort Collins Community Development and Block Grant Commission 2010 to 2014; Foster Parent Larimer County Health and Human Services 2011 to 2012; Larimer County Alzheimer's Association Marketing Committee 2012; Fossil Ridge High School Football Booster Club 2014 to 2015; Team Manager Fort Collins Grizzlies Youth Hockey- Mites 2002

(3) Past and Present Employment/Business Experience:

TEAM Wellness & Prevention 2014 to Present; Canvasback Enterprises 2007 to Present; Bail USA 2011 to 2013; 20th Judicial District Office of the District Attorney 2008 to 2011; Larimer County Sheriff's Office 1996 to 2007; CSU Police Dept. 1994 to 1996

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(4) Specific Qualifications For This Office:

I spent 13 years serving the greater Fort Collins area as a law enforcement officer for the Larimer County Sheriff's Office. I have worked "in the trenches" as the city has grown. I saw firsthand the challenges that face the average Fort Collins resident trying to get or stay ahead. In 2007, I started a small business that evolved into a high tech startup company. I fully understand the struggles that small business owners face economically, physically, and emotionally in their effort to become successful. I also have served as the Executive Director of a public health nonprofit as well as serving on the Community Development and Block Grant Commission (CDBG) for the City of Fort Collins. I understand the impact that human service issues such as mental health, substance abuse, homelessness and others have on our local community and the city's economic health. My work on CDBG gave me insight into the city budget process. Over the years, I have been involved in the legislative process at the local, state and federal level and have helped to inform laws at those levels.

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(5) Why Are You Running for This Office?

I would like to make a difference in the community that I adopted 25 years ago. I want to represent the Southeast Fort Collins community to the rest of the city. I have raised 4 kids who have gone through school in Fort Collins. I have been a foster parent that has worked at risk youth. I understand the challenges that families face here. That is why I am running for Fort Collins City council. I want to make sure that we continue to grow our local economy, improve our public safety and protect our quality of life.

(6) 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. Improve the economic climate for small businesses and entrepreneurship in Fort Collins. Incorporate a city policy that is small business friendly and one that encourages investment into the local innovation and the startup community. Collectively, small business is the largest employer in Fort Collins, therefore their economic health is vital to the city's economic health.
2. Increase the public trust between law enforcement and the community by increasing community policing efforts city wide and by providing police with increased training to support skills to serve population that is culturally and linguistically diverse and has rising mental health challenges. Additionally, support police officer by increasing mental wellness programs that improve officer resiliency.
3. Improve funding and partnerships to address human service needs and prevention efforts within the city. This includes partnering to build a mental health crisis and detox facility that incorporates a youth in crisis center.

(7) 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?

1. Diverse job growth. A balanced job market is key to the local economy and a balanced workforce that is essential to a strong and vibrant economy. Key job sectors include manufacturing, high tech, higher education, and government but we should not

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forget about key primary jobs that provide employees with a livable wage and higher quality of life.

2. Traffic safety including I-25 access and expansion. As Fort Collins continues to grow the connection to the Denver metro area and other neighboring community's increases. Congestion along the I-25 corridor has caused significant safety and convenience issues that limit access to and from Fort Collins. This impacts our local economy.

3. Affordable housing. The cost of housing has increased dramatically over the years. The city must work to encourage and supplement affordable housing efforts in the city. The high price of housing displaces a large segment of our workforce which in turn reduces local spending.

The city is critical in supporting the short, medium and long term vision for economic health. The city sets policies that emphasize that vision by fostering an economically friendly environment for industries and businesses that align with that vision. Therefore, it is critical the vision is informed by and is inclusive of segments of the Fort Collins community through its elected representatives. I will make the economy a budget priority by supporting policies that continue to grow our local economy.

(8) 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.

I think we need to understand the economic struggles that employers face when employing a workforce. We need to fully understand the impact that the minimum wage hike may have on employers. The elimination of jobs could be an unintended consequence of the increase. If that is a case, the city should look at creative ways to alleviate that pinch. That starts with engaging the business community in dialogue aimed at relationship building and understanding. I think that a strong relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and the City is key to that relationship. Regular attendance at Chamber events would be a key focus of mine. In addition, I would like to reach out and work with business leaders in my district in an effort to understand their challenges and successes.

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- (9) 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?

Fort Collins is really the economic hub of Northern Colorado and therefore should be a leader when it comes to providing access to retail shopping, services, the arts, healthcare and education to the Northern Colorado region. I believe that economic health, public safety and quality of life are the top issues facing Fort Collins. I think that economic health encompasses small business, job creation, triple bottom line philosophy and smart growth. Public safety incorporates traffic safety issues, including access to I-25 and the I-25 corridor, alternative transportation and public transportation to alleviate traffic congestion. It also includes strong police/community relations aimed at improving public trust and relieving financial liability. Finally, I believe that we need to protect our quality of life by investing in human services that impact and support families and people in our community. Mental health, substance abuse, and other human service related issues impact our local economy in a myriad of ways and also impact our quality of life. Investing in prevention and treatment saves money in the long run.

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

The city must use smart planning and forward thinking to plan for inevitable growth. That means ensuring that infrastructure and services to the community grow along side of the population growth. It also means preserving the quality of life that makes Fort Collins a unique and great community. That includes the open space and natural areas that is revered by so many in our community. We must carefully weigh all interests when divesting in these areas and do so with great consideration impact that may have on our quality of life and our local economy.

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

I believe that we have a mental health and substance abuse crisis that boiling under the surface of our community. The impact of this crisis has broad reaching public health, social, and economic impact on our community. Mental health and substance abuse

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issues cost our local economy millions in lost wages, medical costs, enforcement costs, and community impact costs. These issues are also a public safety issue in our community. Colorado and Larimer County has some of the highest suicide rates in the country. Statistically these deaths are most often attributed to mental health and substance abuse. We are also learning that most addiction issues are closely linked to mental health, thus requiring a dual disorder diagnosis. If we as the city don't work with private, county and state organizations to begin tackling these issues on a larger scale, we will begin to see the quality of life in Fort Collins begin to drop and thus the closely intertwined economy.

I believe that managed and planned growth is a top issue facing the Fort Collins community. This incorporates infrastructure, housing, transportation and job growth. These are the issues that either draw people to Fort Collins or push them away from this community. They are also the issues that draw or repel large employers to the community thus increasing our local economy.

- (12) 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?

I believe that the city needs to work to improve community outreach efforts in order to better inform policy issues. I believe that community engagement and partnership is a critical part of that effort. I also believe we should closely analyze the use of contractors in our outreach efforts to determine if we are getting the best value for the work. It may be worth exploring creative and progressive strategies for engaging community input. As a Council Member, I plan to hold regular meetings in my district aimed at engaging the community in City wide issues and to gain valued insight from my constituents. I would like to be more accessible and transparent to my District.

- (13) The City adopted very aggressive Climate goals in 2016. What role does government have in driving achievement of those goals?

I believe that the City sets the tone in establishing these climate goals for the entire

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community. I believe in the triple bottom line philosophy that the city has adopted. With that said, we must support an economic climate that for small business that affords them to ability to embrace the triple bottom line. I understand that, for a small business owner, it is difficult to embrace the social and environmental if you are struggling to make the financial bottom line. When it comes to climate and the environment many are polarized on the issue. No matter what side one takes, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that we have limited natural resources. We must safeguard these resources in order to preserve our quality of life now and for generations to come. Exploring alternative energy sources is wise as we plan for our future and can be done while balancing business interests over the long term. A focus on clean energy would provide good paying jobs in our community. Fort Collins has the opportunity to have a real leader in this area. Again, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that if we pollute our air, water and land we will impact the quality of life that Fort Collins is known for thus negatively impacting our local economy.

- (14) Past droughts and the High Park Fire 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?

We must look at *all* water conservation and storage strategies in an order to determine a balanced plan that preserves water and makes it available in times of need. We must balance those strategies with our local economy to ensure that proposed solutions don't negatively impact our local economy. We go to great lengths to conduct environment impact studies when it comes to large public projects. I think that it is equally important that the city conduct economic impact studies on these large scale federal project to ensure that these projects are in the best interest of our local community.

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- (15) What are the top three transportation improvements the City of Fort Collins should accomplish? Should the City of Fort Collins be investing in North I-25?

I-25 access including infrastructure changes at all Fort Collins access points to I-25.

I-25 Expansion including alternative mass transit. I-25 between Fort Collins and Denver has long exceeded its capacity. It must be widened in order to support the use from 7 to 10 years ago, let alone today. We need to plan for the future by exploring alternative mass transit options that allow daily commuters to travel along the corridor quickly and efficiently.

Future planning for connectivity of public transit options.

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

Because I am a small business owner and I run a small business nonprofit. I feel the pains that they feel. I understand the sleepless nights that come with the pressure of running a business and providing a livelihood for your employees and one self.

- (17) 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.

Gordon Coombes

1/16/2017

Signature

Date