

Chamber Candidate Questionnaire – Brian Varga

1. After going through the first four years of being on Council and learning a Councillors role and responsibilities, I feel that I still go back to my original reason for putting my name forward and that is and was to work hard, to be a positive and strong voice, with strong core values and to try and make a difference for all the citizens of Medicine Hat.
2. Well, even though it is my first term as Councillor the knowledge that I have gained over these 4 years should help me. Experience in the Councillor role for the City should matter. In order to be effective in this role as Councillor, you have to have some experience with process and protocols to be effective as a Councillor.
3. My five strategic priorities for the next 4 years are: Economic Development, Infrastructure, Social Wellness, Image and Profile and City Government. Five strategic priorities that we established in 2013 and ones that we should continue to build upon for our next term in office.
4. Well, growth is a tough subject, business and industry have got to want to come to our city. They have to realize the benefits, incentives and profits that they might achieve in our community. Even though it is tough, and not allowed or incriminating against other businesses, we have to come up with ways to entice businesses to come to our community. If we don't think of new ways our business future will stay flat and not improve. Incentives have to be looked at to get Industry and new businesses to develop in our City. We should also look at ways to help industry and businesses that are already set up and operating in our city. Offer incentives to expand their operations where possible.
5. I believe that since they are making it mandatory to engage in this process I believe that the engagement with the other two municipalities(Redcliff and the Cypress County) is very important. The three municipalities should make a collaborative effort to work together to share services and not duplicate these services, in turn providing the service for a much less cost by doing it individually. Since we are so close just work together to provide the service to the three communities.
6. Our tax ratio over the past 15 years has changed very little. In 2002 it was 2.31% and in 2016 it as at 2.25. Compared to other cities in the province like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grand Prairie, Airdrie and Medicine Hat the average is 2.054. That average is sufficient if you feel the cities are indeed comparable. I feel they are not, the fact that so many factors come into play when figuring out the non-residential tax rate are in the equation, I feel we are close to where the rate should be. Present market rates, what you can rent the building for, the age of the building all are factors that come into play when the tax rate is established. Other things that also come into play are things like population, type and mix of industry, economies of scale of commercial and industrial developments and economic shifts in values between classes. I believe it is close to where it should be considering all the factors.
7. My vision for downtown is to continue with incentives and grants that the City provides which will enhance and improve properties in the downtown core. The hardest part is that developers and business owners alike, have to see the benefits in fixing up their properties.
8. We have, in my opinion some of the best sports facilities in Alberta or in Canada for that matter for a city of our size. Through our Financially Fit program we have implement a "Fair Entry" policy so more individuals and families can have the opportunity to access these facilities. I believe we have to continue to subsidize these facilities and continue with this fair entry policy.

9. Medicine Hat's air service will only improve if some major airlines sets up shop in Medicine Hat. We have enhanced our air terminal with the new expansion, we are in the works to upgrade and improve our runway. All the other factors your question suggests will only come into effect if another major airlines comes to our City. We are in constant talks with these other airlines and hope that one day they will see our airport as something that they can fit into their business plan. Until then all we can do is offer what we have at our airport.

10. I believe this is an ongoing work in progress. The city is constantly trying to improve what they do for the business community as a whole. Technology is in constant demand but also comes with a hefty price tag. I believe that the cities staff do their best to help any customer that comes to their counter. The city has to continue to make the process easier and better and I believe that they are making strides to do so both technically and in person.

11. Fees and charges are scrutinized many times before they are implemented by Council. Many of the costs are looked at as not so much as what is the real cost of that service but how much are we going to subsidize to provide this service to our community. In many cases if we were to charge the full price for the service no one would use it. I would constantly evaluate the justification of increased fees and charges as they arose so they are fair and reasonable for everyone.

12. We have started and implemented the "Financially Fit" strategy for our city. We will constantly evaluate and re-evaluate the different areas and increase or decrease the levers as time goes forward. We must stay the course and move forward with this Financially Fit process until our Commodities regain their strength or diversification takes place and once again start making money to put money into our new Heritage fund and lessen the burden on the people of this community.