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https://www.facebook.com/Mary-McFarland-for-Ada-County-Commissioner-District-2-106627180959643/?modal=admin_todo_tour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysTk-E9-7bE&t=27s>

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1. Please list your top three priorities if elected to the Ada County Commission.

My highest priority is to rein in out-of-control spending in Ada County.

The county's budget process is broken. For years, commissioners have directed department heads to use the prior year's budget and add three percent. Instead, departments should start at zero and add only justifiable line items.

Currently, many departments don't utilize all of their budgeted dollars; the 'leftover' money gets funneled into future large Capital Improvement projects without a vote of taxpayers.

I would stop taking forgone taxes. It is not right for commissioners to collect taxes not taken in past years.

My next priority is to ensure the county stops stockpiling large amounts of money to fund Capital Improvements. Piecemealing projects out over years is an underhanded scheme to build projects and expand government without taxpayer approval.

My other priority is to increase transparency. It is too difficult to find information online about the dealings of the commission. The fact that the *Idaho Statesman* had to sue the county over access to public records should alarm everyone. In this day of technology, it's unacceptable.

2. In your view, what are the top three challenges currently facing Ada County?

Growth
Transportation
Taxes

3. What specific steps would you take as a Commissioner to address those issues?

Growth:

Many newcomers see what we have here and don't want it to become the place they left behind. They can be the most vocal because they've already experienced the problems that can accompany rapid growth.

The majority of high-density housing is being built within Ada County's cities, not in unincorporated Ada County, where the commissioners have authority. Limiting density via zoning and careful comprehensive planning is a good way to control growth while treating private property owners fairly. Cities and the county can and should amend the zoning (densities) within their comprehensive plans. I've heard talk of moratoriums on growth but that's just an unfair way to punish private property owners, due to the government's failure to do appropriate planning.

One of the biggest impacts of this high-density growth is more traffic.

Transportation:

I'd like to see all six cities, the Ada County Highway District, the Idaho Department of Transportation, the Community Planning Association (COMPASS) and the county work together on an overall plan.

The lack of a north-south highway through Ada County is a major problem. When I was on the Eagle City Council, we looked at an option south of Highway 55. Sadly, this was the lowest priority on ACHD's list of projects. By working together, we can find the right solutions.

Taxes:

Reviewing the Capital Investment Program (CIP) FY 20-24, there is a huge list of wants that add up to tens of millions of dollars.

The Coroner's base budget has grown from \$1.75 million in FY2015 to over \$3 million in FY2020. In addition, according to the CIP report, 'a construction fund has already been established for this project... the BoCC allocated \$1,250,000 from surplus funding.' In fact, the coroner's budget has really doubled to \$4.25 million in FY2020.

"Surplus funding" is how commissioners finance big projects without taking them to the voters, also known as over taxation!

Since 2015, the Board has depleted forgone taxes – money NOT previously collected from taxpayers - from over \$19 million, down to \$8.5 million. They have now permanently added \$11 million to their budget by raising taxes beyond the allowed, annual 3%.

4. What separates you from the other candidates running for your district?

All of the candidates bring something unique to the table. I bring a lifetime of experience running small businesses right here in Idaho as well as local government experience here in Ada County.

As a small business owner, I owned restaurants for 17 years and a local magazine for ten years. I know the value of every dollar earned and always look for ways to save money.

I work very differently than a government body. I've watched as government officials seek to spend as much as they can squeeze out of taxpayers' pockets with grandiose plans. It's opposite of how private business is done.

My local political experience within Ada County sets me apart from the other candidates. I have established great working relationships throughout the entire County.

I served the City of Eagle as a City Council member for a four-year term. During my first year the Council reduced the City budget by 20%. Just five years after

my term, the budget has doubled! I am proposing a new way of budgeting for Ada County that will save taxpayer dollars.

5. What do you see as the most pressing needs for infrastructure or capital projects in the county?

Without meeting with all department heads and hearing from them, I can't fully know the needs of the County. I will collaborate with departments to scrutinize wants vs. needs.

2. What is your experience with preparing or authorizing budgets?

I have owned businesses since I was 21 years old. I have written budgets for all of my businesses. I also served as an Eagle City Council member from 2011-2015. In my first year in office we cut the City budget by 20%! The following years saw slow managed growth. Just five years later, the budget has more than doubled.

7. Do you feel property taxes are too high in Ada County? If your answer is yes, please explain what you can do as a Commissioner to reduce property taxes.

Yes!

Ada County's budget has grown from \$200 million to \$300 million in just seven years. There was \$19 million in forgone left in taxpayers pockets, in just a few years they've depleted the forgone to just \$8 million. They stockpile money to fund huge projects and leave the voters out of the decision making process. The BoCC hasn't had a bond since 1992 yet, they continue to grow and build more by over budgeting and piecing projects out over the years.

They need to stop rubberstamping prior budgets with an automatic 3% increase and start at zero and justify/prioritize expenditures.

8. How do you propose to manage the growth that Ada County is experiencing?

As mentioned above, most of the growth is within the cities, not within unincorporated Ada County. Zoning (densities) is the best way to control high-density housing. Comprehensive plans must be reviewed to balance the growth with individual cities.

9. With that growth comes challenges for our transportation infrastructure to keep pace, how do propose we approach the transportation issues in Ada County? As stated above:

Transportation:

I'd like to see all six cities, the Ada County Highway District, the Idaho Department of Transportation, the Community Planning Association (COMPASS) and the county work together on an overall plan.

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Cities and the county can and should amend the zoning (densities) within their comprehensive plans. I've heard talk of moratoriums on growth but that's just an unfair way to punish private property owners, due to the government's failure to do appropriate planning.

10. Would you support legislation to allow counties and cities to have local option taxing authority?

Yes or No

If yes, for what purposes would you support it and what, if any, specific requirements do you feel should be in place? If no, why not?

NO

Ada County has been stockpiling millions to grow the budget already. I do not support another way for them to take more money in the form of option taxes.

11. How can Ada County help Meridian businesses recover from the damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic?

Ada County is only indirectly involved with the health care system by providing:

- 1) Funding to the Central District Health Department and appointing three of its board members;
- 2) Ambulance transport and pre-hospital medical care through Ada County Paramedics; and,
- 3) Payments for medical care through its Indigent Services Department, as required under state law.

The economic devastation being created by the coronavirus pandemic is causing state and local government officials to contemplate belt tightening. It has always been clear to me, but is increasingly becoming clear to others, that local government can cut budgets significantly and should be doing so even when the economy is stable or growing.

Thank you for participating. Please return by May 5, 2020 to michelle.leverett@meridianchamber.org.