



WINONA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2022 CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

City Council

Jeff Hyma - Ward 2 Candidate

- 1. Please provide a brief biography detailing your background and including your occupation, job title, employer, and education.**

I have lived in Winona's Ward 2 for 26 years, and raised 2 boys who both attended and graduated from Madison Elementary, WMS and WSHS. I retired last January, but prior to that worked within public education for forty years. About twenty years were as a HS teacher, including 6 years at WSHS (1997-2003) and about twenty years as a Field Staff for Education Minnesota where I negotiated collective bargaining agreements, resolved grievances and worked as a lobbyist on labor and educational issues. I hold bachelor degrees from University of Toledo and California State University at Sacramento. I hold a Master's degree from University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.

- 2. Among the Chamber's top priorities are economic development, workforce development, and community promotion. Explain how you see those priorities as important to our community and explain how you would work alongside the Chamber and business community on such initiatives?**

I think all three of these priorities are important and together provide some of the structural support for our community to grow and prosper. I have a lot to learn before I could offer specifics about the ways I would work alongside the Chamber. In general, my approach to working with the Chamber would be the same one I have used in the past when faced with something I do not have a lot of experience with or a deep understanding of. Listen, in order to understand the concerns or issues, research the data and solutions, and work collectively to develop consensus and resolution.

- 3. Winona has a long history of being a transportation, business and manufacturing hub in the region. Winona has experienced a new surge in tourism and arts industry in the last decade. What strategies do you embrace for the future of Winona? (You may pick more than one)**
 - a. Expand Port, rail, trucking and other transportation facilities and related infrastructure.**
 - b. Enhance tourism development with focus on downtown, limiting truck traffic and encouraging new small business in downtown.**
 - c. Pursue additional commercial/industrial land for future expansion of Winona's existing and emerging manufacturing businesses.**

I think all three of the strategies are important and ideally would work in a synergistic fashion to complement each other. Winona's diversified economy which includes its regional importance in both transportation and industry has always been one of its greatest strengths. Winona's downtown has made impressive strides in the last 5-10 years and I feel holds considerable untapped potential to expand as the area hub for the arts and recreational opportunities.

4. What do you believe are barriers for business growth and what would you do to influence how the City addresses these barriers?

As I mentioned previously, I have a steep learning curve ahead and I would need to hear from the business community before I could venture an opinion on what the barriers to growth are or how I could influence the ways the City addresses them.

5. What is the role of City government to improve the start-up business environment in Winona?

I think the role of the City should be to help support prospective businesses of any size to navigate the municipal requirements needed to start an enterprise. The City should be ensuring a level playing field for all business owners and protect the interests of the public it serves.

6. Winona's success has led to questions and discussion on how to manage increased growth. How would you ensure the city appropriately balances the need for additional government (public safety, serves, etc.) without unfairly burdening citizens and businesses (zoning regulations, increasing taxes, etc.) as we address the symptoms of growth?

I believe in using the resources available as efficiently as possible, and if additional resources are needed one should be transparent about what is being asked for, why it is needed and how much it is going to cost. Then engage the community to see if it has their support and if it does not, discern why not. There is a difference between wants and needs and whether it is a City or an individual, the research needs to be done and a decision (which is never perfect) needs to be made about what falls into each category, what is ultimately affordable and provides the most benefit to the community at large.

7. What is your vision for the future of Winona?

I think Winona has a very bright future, with the 3 higher Education institutions and a diversified manufacturing base I think we are fortunate to be on solid economic footing. While continued support of these areas is needed, they also provide the base to expand the investment in downtown, the arts and recreation opportunities that continue to make Winona a city that people not only can afford to live in but desire to live in.

8. Each of Winona's three higher education institutions has distinct and unique issues as we move into the future. How do you see the City working with the colleges and universities issues?

The colleges and universities are a great assets to Winona, I support a continued collaborative approach. There is much direct economic benefit, arts enrichment and industrial spinoff that comes from the relationship of the City and these institutions, it needs to be fostered and supported.

9. As a City leader, what approach would you take to balance community growth and the rights of private property owners?

I do not have a specific approach that I would take other than working together to be good neighbors and find the balance between the rights of the individual with the needs of the community for the specific situation. With situations involving a high degree of complexity that balance is not typically going to be found in a one size fits all approach.

10. Where do you stand on possible future pandemic mitigations? How would you balance having a vibrant local economy while maintaining a safe community?

I would rely on the recommendations from State and Federal medical officials to guide what needs to be done to keep the community safe and the economy moving forward.

11. Where do you stand on the Police & Fire Safety Center (eg. East End Rec) issue from a standpoint of business growth and development.

At the 9/19/22 City Council meeting, a unanimous vote was taken to remove the East End Rec center from consideration as a site for a combined Police and Fire Safety Center and to focus solely on alternative sites. I support that decision.

12. Many communities across the state have seen many public safety officers leave or retire early from their positions. These same communities are having difficulty re-filling these positions due to negative public perceptions and lack of funding. What steps do you believe need to be taken to ensure that our community's law enforcement is adequately funded and supported so that our community remains safe and healthy.

I think Winona has historically done a good job in providing the needed funding to maintain public safety within the community. I support continuing the needed funding to meet that goal. However, I am also open to looking at new ways of doing things and finding efficiencies so that tax dollars are always used effectively to meet the goal I think we all can agree on, a safe community for all.