

2013 Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Survey

CANDIDATE NAME: William J. McTygue

CANDIDATE FOR (OFFICE): Commissioner of Public Works

QUESTION #1: Please briefly define “sustainability” and what it means to you.

Response:

To me, sustainability has two different meanings Economic Sustainability as well as Physical Sustainability.

For Saratoga Springs, Economic sustainability means providing for and adopting government policies that encourage local economic growth and investment while at the same time allowing adequate revenue be available to local government to fulfill its mission and responsibility to its taxpayers.

Additionally, my definition of Physical sustainability recognizes a wide variety of environmental policy issues considered important to the Saratoga Springs community. Included, under this category would be issues dealing with rules and regulations defining the City’s construction and building policies and status of the City’s utility systems with respect to supply and demand.

Also, included would be the City’s current status with respect to important physical assets. Assets that help define what’s important to the quality of life in Saratoga Springs. Included would be the quality of our City’s recreational facilities and play fields, programs that encourage environmental awareness and good environment management practices, programs that sponsor energy savings initiatives, policies dealing with sensible traffic control, the importance of our City’s urban forest that line City streets, and the importance of City walkability and the need for adequate sidewalks in critical areas along City streets where currently no sidewalks exist.

QUESTION #2: Many businesses, institutions and municipal governments have designated sustainability coordinators. Do you support the creation of a sustainability coordinator or office in city hall or in the county government?

Response:

I would support assigning duties dealing with coordination of sustainability initiatives to an individual within city government. As the City’s former Director of Public Works, I always supported the idea for a City established position that incorporates the functions

of a much needed environmental technician into the Department of Public Works. I firmly believe the responsibilities for such a position would be a natural fit for other duties that would otherwise be assigned to a sustainability coordinator within City government. I believe such a position could pay for itself through the securing of government grants and energy savings initiatives alone.

QUESTION #3: What can we do locally to confront climate change?

Response:

I fully support sensible City policies and initiatives dealing with green policy initiatives. As Commissioner of Public Works, I would initiate and undertake a review for the possibility of second energy performance initiative. This would be a follow-up to the City's first, and very successful, \$1.7 million energy performance contract that was accomplished in 2006-2007. I believe a second energy performance program could further enhance conditions within City Hall, especially issues dealing with the many unit air-conditioners, in practically every window in City Hall, significantly adding to the consumption of electrical energy and adding to the problem of green-house gas.

QUESTION #4: What are some of your ideas for sustainable economic development for our community? Do they include casino gambling?

Response:

The greatest challenge facing the City today has to do with issues dealing with growth, economic and physical. The economic realities facing Saratoga Springs require the City Council strike a workable balance between much needed City services that match our City's quality of life with available but limited revenue. The days of substantial property tax increases are over, and while other supporting revenues are important, it's the sales tax revenue (\$10 million this year alone) that provides the majority of our operating revenue. Sales tax is clearly the one item we would hope to grow. However, it is worth noting, while Saratoga Springs generates a total \$20 million in local sales tax, Saratoga County takes half of all local sales tax generated in Saratoga Springs. This alone, represents another \$10 million in local sales tax going to the County.

Any sustainable growth policy should be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, sustainable economic development projects should include projects that are consistent with the City's outer district "City-in-the Country" zoning criteria. A sustainable growth policy for our downtown business district should include community smart initiatives dealing with downtown street-scape improvements, additional parking and a solution to the decades old problem of large, pass-through truck traffic.

While I personally oppose the state-wide gaming amendment on the General Election ballot, I realize that Saratoga Springs has an important role to play in protecting our local horse racing industry. Thus, in the event the measure passes state-wide, the City Council may very well be asked to support the Saratoga Springs Racino and Raceway's gaming application. This could be an important opportunity for the city to work with the owners of the Racino and Harness Track to secure important concessions that are important to the City.

QUESTION #5: How do you envision the future development of land within the city's core and within the "greenbelt?"

Response:

Any development proposal within the City has to be consistent with the spirit of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Of special concern, is my strong suspicions that the City does not have the infrastructure capability (water and sewer) to accommodate any large scale development much beyond what already exists. As the new Commissioner of Public Works, I plan on instituting a re-evaluation of our infrastructure needs and priorities.

QUESTION #6: If elected, what kinds of sustainable activities or projects would you likely retain? How could they be improved? Which ones would you initiate?

Response:

As previously mentioned, I would review the City's opportunities with respect to a new energy performance contract initiative for City owned buildings, especially City Hall. I would also initiate a recycling program for all of City Hall. Currently no program exists.

Also, the City's local law dealing with idling of vehicles will be enforced for all City vehicles. Currently, the City's rules are not being enforced for DPW vehicles.

As Commissioner of Public Works I would fully support the Sustainable Saratoga's efforts with respect to the Urban Tree Forestry Project. I would also support changes to the City's subdivision and land use regulations that mandate and encourage sensible public policy measures designed to enhance the City's urban forest.