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E-Mail: Russ@RussJohnson.org
Marital Status: Married

Residency: Kansas City, MO resident for 4 years.
Northland resident for 13 years.

Taxes: Current on all tax returns and taxes owed.

Education

- MBA with Honors (4.00 GPA), Park University, Parkville, Missouri
- BS, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Majors: Economics & Computer Science, Regents Scholar (4-year full tuition scholarship)
- Completed Summer International Economics Program at Oxford University, Mansfield College, Oxford, England

Sources of Income

- System Solutions, Principal and Managing Consultant. System Solutions is an Information Technology firm specializing in software development services and commercializing intellectual property.
- Rents and gains on real estate investments
- Dividends and gains on publicly traded and cash equivalent investments

Previous Public Office

- Kansas City Public Improvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), 2nd District, 2003-2006
- Kansas City Impact Fee Advisory Committee, Area E, Chair, 2003-2006
- Kansas City Line Creek Valley Development Plan Steering Committee, Co-Chair, 2006
- Kansas City 2nd Street Corridor Steering Committee, Member, 2003-2006
- Platte County Public Water District #6, Board of Directors

Civic, Church and Other

- St. Therese Catholic Church, Parish Member
- Club North, President, 2001
- Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce, Member, 1996-2006
- Centurions, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Class of 2003
- Citizens Association, Board of Directors, 2003-2006
- KCMO/Platte County/MoDOT Transportation Committee, Founder & Active Participant
- KCMO/Platte County Trails Committee, Founder & Active Participant
- The Downtowners, Board of Directors, 2005-2006
- Downtown Council, Member, 2003-2006
- ITKC, Chair and Board Member, 2001-2003
- Silicon Prairie Technology Association, IT Network Committee, Chair, 2001

Other

- Eagle Scout
- Husband of wife Julie, 13 years
- Father of daughters Victoria, Olivia and Sophia
- Works in the 2nd District
- Headquarters business Downtown in the 2nd District
- Owns property in the 2nd District, both in the Northland and Downtown

/s/ Russ Johnson

11-17-06

Signature

Date

Citizens Association

Mayoral/Council Questionnaire

2006/2007

Please answer these specific questions in writing and return with your questionnaire by noon on October 25, 2006 (for Mayoral candidates) or November 17, 2006 (for Council candidates). This form can be downloaded in either WordPerfect or Word format from the Citizens Association's website at www.citizensassociation.com.

CITY BUDGET

1. **Budget Process.** Please outline your understanding of the City's budgetary process and suggest any changes you would like to make.

The City Manager prepares the budget, submits it to the Mayor for his/her input. The budget is then forwarded to the Council for deliberation and enactment. The Council must be given adequate time and resources to perform its role in the budgetary process.

2. **Budget Priorities.** Where do you feel more funds in the City's budget should be allocated? Include the three highest priority projects/items in the City budget. Where do you feel less funds in the City's budget should be allocated? Include the three lowest priority projects/items in the City budget.

Highest Priority

1. Public Safety
2. Maintenance/Infrastructure
3. Codes Enforcement

Lowest Priority

1. Economic Incentives that are unnecessary
2. Parking Control
3. Repeatedly repairing the same decrepit water line that obviously needs replaced.

3. **Fiscal Strategy.** The revised City Charter now calls for the City to develop formal policies for debt management and economic development incentives. In crafting and adhering to these policies, how would you identify goals and address risks, opportunities, and tradeoffs. When would you advocate an exception to these policies?

Please comment on Mark Funkhouser's audit of the city's debt. Give examples of where you agree, or disagree, with his conclusions.

Any debt policy for the City should be based on quantitative, standard measures that can be used to easily compare the City's debt against its peers. Goals and risk management should then be crafted from those measures. In other words, the policy should state where the City's debt position should be

relative to its peer cities. It should not be driven by subjective and emotional criteria. Mr. Funkhouser is very good at raising issues, but historically he has not provided expert driven recommendations. As no outside expert recommendations are available to compare to Mr. Funkhouser's conclusions, it would not be prudent to evaluate them at this time.

4. **Taxation Level.** Please provide your opinion of the current level of City taxes and whether you would recommend that any taxes be reduced or increased?

Self-imposed taxes such as CIDs, NIDs, TDDs, etc., should be always considered prior to citywide taxes. If government services can be provided by these mechanisms, then they offset the need for City taxes. However, if an identifiable citywide need must be addressed, and there is no other revenue source, then the tax level may need to be adjusted by a vote of the citizens. Non-specific, general purpose tax increases that are not connected to a specific outcome should be avoided.

5. **Employee wages.** Provide your opinion of the current pay levels of city workers. Be specific with respect to police, fire and other employees: are the allocations to Police and Fire sufficient? If not, what elements of the budget would you reduce to make those allocations larger?

The pay levels of city workers must be competitive with the marketplace and the City's peers. This is quantifiable and measurable. Allocations must be reflective of the City's area and population. Pay levels and allocations must keep Kansas City competitive and allow the City to provide quality services to its citizens.

6. **Reserves.** The City has a "goal" of a reserve balance of 8%. What is your opinion of the 8% goal and how would you suggest the balance be restored to 8%? How long do you suggest it will take to restore the 8% balance?

The reserve balance should be 8%-10% in order to have a reasonable cushion in the budget for unexpected material events. The city should increase the fund balance by \$3 million per year until at least the 8% threshold is reached through swept funds, spending restraint and conservative budgeting. \$3 million is 0.7% of the City's annual general fund budget.

BASIC SERVICES

7. **Basic Services.** What should be included in the term "basic services"? How well the City is providing them? What changes are needed to improve the level and delivery of those basic services? Please comment on the Citizens' Satisfaction Survey. Give examples of improvements you would make, and how you would accomplish them.

Basic Services includes well-maintained streets and parks, street lights, police, fire, ambulance, water, sewer, trash collection, and good customer service. According to citizen surveys, the city is not doing a good job providing basic services. Quite simply, the Council needs to prioritize Basic Services and tie internal incentives to them. The City Manager's own bonus should be based heavily on Citizen Satisfaction.

8. **Indigent Care.** What is the City's role in providing health care services to indigent people in Kansas City? Should the City change its current selection or support of agencies providing these services? Do you support the Margaret Kemp Center project?

The City needs to measure its role in health care by considering its capacity to provide such services compared to the capacity of the state and federal governments. The City should encourage and assist the Margaret Kemp Center project during its planning, construction and start-up phases and ensure that the Center becomes self-sufficient.

9. **Responsiveness.** Provide your thoughts as to the responsiveness of City Hall to valid requests for services? If, in your opinion, this could be improved, what steps would you take to do so?

By far, most citizens and businesses I have spoken with state that City Hall is unresponsive. The city must measure this consistently, track the trend, and implement internal incentives and other measures to bring about improvement. Again, the City Manager's own bonus should be awarded based on how this item is trending.

10. **Planning.** What priority do you give to rewriting of the zoning/ subdivision ordinances?

Very high. The goals of the FOCUS plan cannot be realized without policies that support them.

11. **Parks and Recreation.** How important is Kansas City's system of parks and boulevards? Should the Parks Commission remain independent? What services should be reduced or eliminated? How would you provide better funding and quality of services for these activities?

Very important. The Parks Commission should remain independent. However, any efficiencies that may be realized by eliminating duplication should be explored. Pursue localized funding of neighborhood services through such mechanisms as a CID or NID.

12. **Consolidation with Counties.** What opportunities exist to consolidate services provided by the City with those of Jackson, Clay and/or Platte Counties?

Based on actual experience, Platte County has demonstrated that it can implement capital improvements faster and at less cost while still complying with the City's contracting requirements. Such partnerships, when they are clearly beneficial, must be implemented.

13. **Public Transit.** What is your opinion of public mass transit? What changes would you make? Do you favor a light rail system? Would you support a ballot measure (including dedicated tax) for public transit? Do you support MARC's regional Smart Moves regional initiative?

I believe the City's mass transit system is substandard, especially when users must stand in mud puddles to catch a bus. Downtown will be easier to occupy with businesses with a viable commuter-centric mass transit system. Light-rail and commuter rail needs to be integrated in the mass transit system. It is time for the City/Council to put in the effort to significantly improve the City's mass transit system.

14. **Flood and Wastewater Control.** Outline your general thoughts on the City's plans to improve flood and wastewater control. What would you do to address the combined sewer problem; what funding mechanisms would you use and how would you be fair to the rest of the city in funding/fixing this problem?

The City has taken far too long in creating plans to deal with flood and stormwater control and the combined sewers. These problems did not just suddenly appear; they have been with the City for a very long time. All funding options must be allowed to be aired and the option that best serves the City's residents and property owners should be implemented. As these options have yet to be fully evaluated and presented, championing any one of them at this time is premature.

**DEFERRED MAINTENANCE
AND
CAPITAL
IMPROVEMENTS**

15. **Deferred Maintenance.** How do you plan to address the City's backlog of deferred maintenance? How should this be funded? How much should be allocated to capital maintenance and how would you suggest that capital maintenance funding be increased to achieve this? Place this in a timetable.

Prioritize maintenance in the City's general funds budget. Increase the annual maintenance appropriation by \$4 million per year until it reaches at least \$65 million annually. These funds must be achieved by reductions in other items that are less of a priority and reducing overhead.

16. PIAC. What are your thoughts on the current Public Improvements Advisory Council process? Specifically: do you support an independent citizen review/recommendation process? What changes would you suggest?

As a PIAC member for three and a half years, I believe the PIAC process is valuable and necessary. It can be improved by reinstating a project rating system and by allowing the Council to set general guidelines on how to allocate capital resources.

PUBLIC SAFETY

17. Police. What is your opinion of the current level of services provided by the police? Do you favor placing control of the Police Department within the City, and if so, how would this be governed?

All levels of City services, including police, have room for improvement. The governance of the Police Department should not be changed at this time. However, efficiencies may be realized by consolidating some functions with other City departments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

18. Priorities. Give examples of three geographic areas in Kansas City which in your opinion offer the best opportunity for focused development and growth and likewise three areas which most require focused remediation.

Development and Growth

- Line Creek north of 68th (Infill priority per the FOCUS plan)
- 1st and 2nd Creeks (This area is east of KCI, south of I-435)
- Little Blue Valley (East of I-435 between US 40 and I-470)

Remediation

- Prospect corridor
- Bannister
- Harlem

19. Privatization. Provide your opinion of “privatization?” What agencies or departments do you feel are candidates for privatization? What is your opinion of CIMO, especially related to cost effectiveness and productivity? When should outside consultants be used? How important is it to rebuild the Public Works Department, and would you make this a priority? Are there other City Departments which should be contracted out?

Any privatization must be evaluated on a case by case basis. In some cases, privatization would be a mistake, in other cases, it may be beneficial. The City currently has relatively high overhead costs in the overall capital budget which cannot be attributed to the amount of capital spending. For example, Olathe is only spending \$2 million on overhead to administer its current capital budget of \$65 million. There are many concerns with CIMO that

need to be addressed, such as oversight, attitude, expertise, transparency, etc.

20. **Downtown.** What, if any, priority should be given to Downtown by the City? What is your opinion of the major City sponsored initiatives? What are the key requirements from the City to make these successful?

- Continue incenting ownership of affordable, middle-class housing
- Target economic incentives to attract businesses that will occupy the vacant Class A commercial space
- Continue to promote Downtown convention business
- Support Downtown investments such as the Performing Arts Center, the Entertainment District, the Sprint Center, H&R Block & East Village
- Pursue reasonable commuter mass-transit
- Subsidize streetscape improvements that encourage pedestrian traffic

21. **TIF.** Provide your opinion on Tax Increment Financing and the current City process? What changes, if any, would you suggest making?

Development incentives should be used to:

- Encourage desired development that would not occur normally
- Subsidize projects that give Kansas City a competitive advantage vs. other cities with which it competes, such as Olathe and Denver
- Build the public infrastructure that new development requires
- Promote strategic areas such as Downtown and developing areas such as the Crossroads
- Preserve or redevelop neighborhoods
- Ensure that Kansas City has a “level playing field” when compared to other cities

I may oppose the use of such incentives when:

- The financial projections are unreasonable
- The City does not have the financial capacity to offer the incentive
- The area of the city is performing well regardless of any incentives (e.g. The Plaza)

22. **Other Economic Development.** Provide your opinion of the other economic development tools (such as 353, LCRA, etc.). What changes, if any, would you suggest making?

See answer for # 21.

23. **Metropolitan competition/cooperation.** What is your evaluation of the City’s relative attractiveness in retaining and growing population, employment and investment? How can Kansas City, MO get our share of regional growth? How can the City be a responsible leader in metropolitan cooperation/ competition?

It is important that the City thoroughly evaluate its competitive position in everything it does and implement the option that improves its competitive advantage. Competitive issues include residential, business and visitor attraction.

GOVERNANCE

24. **Ethics.** Would you participate with other City Council members in an annual ethics seminar?

Yes.

25. **City Manager.** Is the Council-Manager form of government the best for Kansas City? What is your opinion of the listed responsibilities/ goals contained in the current City Manager's contract and if you feel they should be changed or different, what items would you change? For how long should the Manager's contract be? What changes, if any, do you suggest making in the current distribution of responsibilities between the City Manager, Mayor and Council?

The City Manager needs to be an operational and customer service fanatic. He or she should lie awake at night thinking, "How can the City do a better job at fixing the potholes?" The City Manager's bonus should be tied directly to citizen satisfaction.

YOUR ROLE AS A CANDIDATE AND AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

26. **Your Goals.** Why do you want to serve as Mayor/ Councilperson? What abilities do you have to apply to leading a \$1 billion municipal corporation?

The City needs hard working, dedicated Council members. It has many challenges on its plate. I want to work hard to help tackle these challenges. I am sincere, honest, a team-builder, a hard-worker, intelligent, a successful business owner and well educated.

27. **Campaign Tactics.** What key endorsements will you be seeking? What specific commitments have you made, or will need to make, to receive these? Will your campaign include negative tactics?

Citizen's Association, Forward Kansas City, and other interests concerned about 2nd District. I have made no commitments to anyone. My campaign will not utilize negative tactics.

28. **Diversity.** What ability do you have to reconcile differences and be sensitive to racial divisions in this community? Please give examples of situations in which you have successfully displayed this ability.

Kansas City is racially divided. The first step is acknowledging the problem, then listening, learning and understanding.

29. **Personal time commitment.** How much time do you have (and propose to spend) on City (Mayoral/Council) matters?

As much as it takes.

30. **Personal financial support.** If elected, how will you financially support yourself and your family? [*Council only*]

My business, System Solutions, is financially sound and has had steady revenues for many years. It has been in business since 1996 and its customer base is dominated by clients that are located outside of Kansas City, MO.