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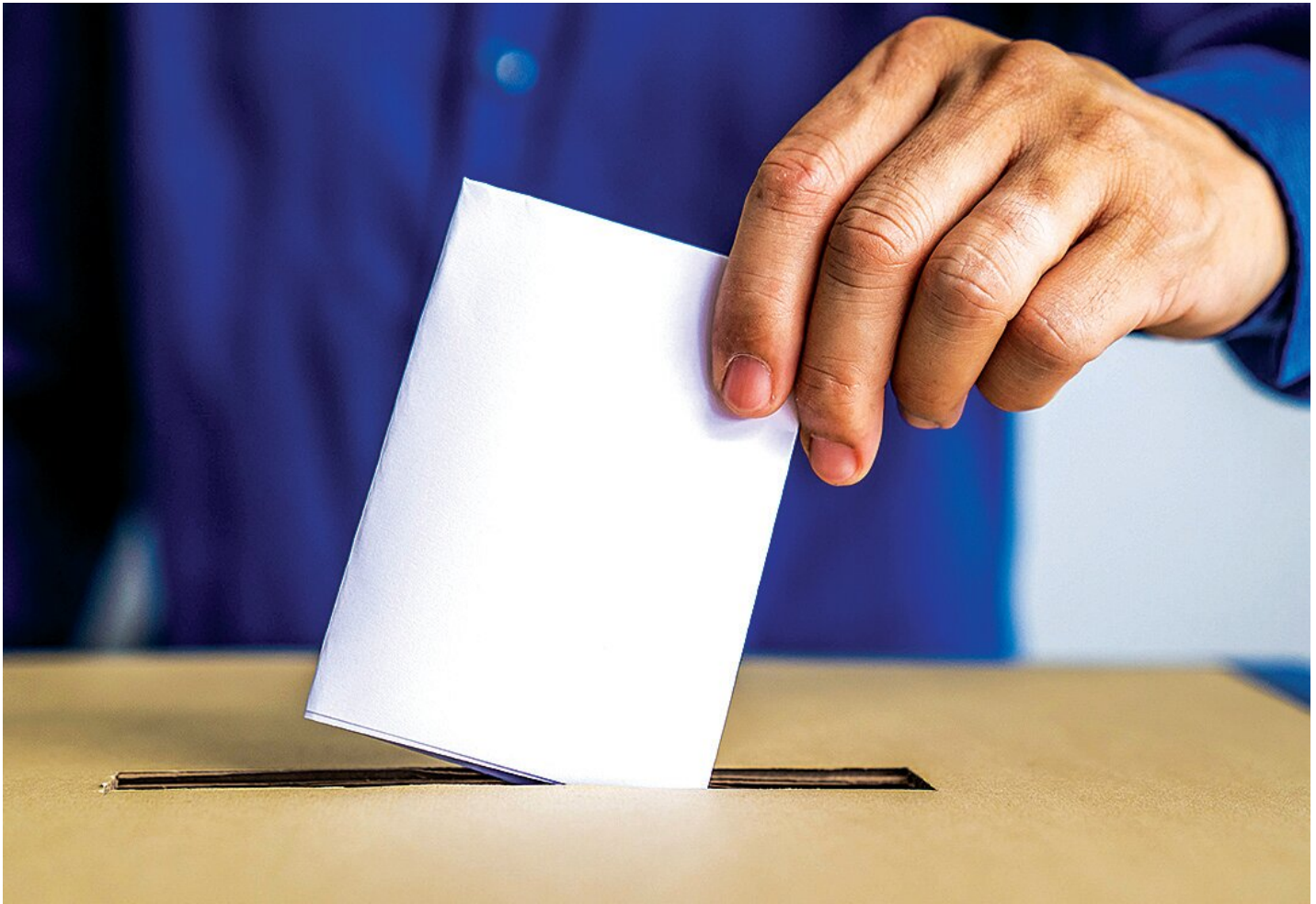


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ELECTION

Fountain Hills candidates take part in Q&A: Part two



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(METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION)

Posted Wednesday, June 5, 2024 9:38 am

The field has been set for the 2024 Fountain Hills Town Council race, with three candidates vying for the office of mayor and eight seeking one of three seats available on the council. All candidates were invited to take part in the Fountain Hills Times Independent's four-part Q&A series, with responses to the second question printed here.

Candidates for town council include Clayton Corey, Matthew Corrigan, Gayle Earle, Henry Male, Peggy McMahon, Art Tolis, Robert Wallace and Rick Watts. Candidates for mayor include Joe Arpaio, Ginny Dickey and Gerry Friedel.

As a reminder, the voter registration deadline for the primary election is July 1. Early ballots are scheduled to be mailed July 3. July 19 is the last day to request an early ballot and July 23 is the final day to mail back early ballots. July 26 is the final day to vote early in person with July 30 being Election Day, with polls scheduled to close at 7 p.m.

Voters may visit BeBallotReady.vote to verify their registration status and to make sure their personal information is accurate. Additional election information can be found at elections.maricopa.gov.

Question: What measures do you believe would make the downtown area more attractive to businesses and shoppers?

Clayton Corey (council)

To make the downtown area more attractive to businesses and shoppers, several measures can be implemented. Enhancing walkability and connectivity by improving pedestrian pathways, adding bike lanes, and creating more public spaces like plazas and courtyards will make the downtown area more accessible and inviting. Encouraging mixed-use developments that combine retail, residential, and office spaces can create a vibrant environment that attracts both businesses and shoppers.

Offering incentives such as tax breaks, grants and streamlined permitting processes can attract new businesses and encourage existing ones to expand. Hosting regular events like farmers markets, art fairs and live performances can draw visitors and increase foot traffic while also strengthening the sense of community. Additionally, investing in aesthetic improvements such as landscaping, street art and well-maintained public facilities can enhance the overall appeal of the downtown area. By implementing these measures, we can create a dynamic downtown that supports local businesses and attracts shoppers, contributing to the economic vitality of Fountain Hills.

Let's work together to make our downtown a thriving hub of activity and commerce.

#FountainHillsFuture ClaytonCorey.com.

Mathew Corrigan (council)

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 47% of all U.S. businesses are small business enterprises. I attended the May 15th downtown strategy session, and it reminded me of the stark contrast in the goals of small business owners vs. those of town government. It is not easy to find a middle ground. Small business owners want Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable and Time measured goals (Smart). Town government wants Funding, Employees, Expectations and Structures goals (Fees).

Small business and government view things differently and so the question is what benefits both small business and government? With inflation, high interest rates and higher minimum wages, the risks in small business have increased. Town government needs to be more flexible within the limits of the original general and master plan vision. Town government can be helpful by not increasing restrictions but by working in concert with the SMART goals of small businesses. With the future construction of the Fountain Hills International Dark Sky Discovery Center, timing could be essential to future small business growth in Fountain Hills.

Ginny Dickey (mayor)

It's exciting to embark on the public outreach portion of the downtown project initiated by our Economic Development Department. The Area Specific Plan from 2009 has been a guide providing similar visions of walkable, bustling, mixed-use districts that span several blocks.

We can enhance the linear park with electrical infrastructure, Wi-Fi, landscaping, shade, and eventual restroom amenities (for now, increased signage for access to existing facilities.)

The park environment is inviting, great for lunch, shopping and happy hours. We can add gathering spaces, "piped-in" music, and build on that desired vibe... live music, food, TAMA (The Avenue Merchants Association) events, Chamber, farmers market, art, town, school and more businesses. With activities, art and family events like Stroll in the Glow, I continue to advocate for a pet relief area to help the turf be a healthy environment for all.

We look forward to the completion of Park Place adding housing and prime commercial space. Our wayfinding signage addressing downtown and other destinations will be an asset, linking AOTF (Avenue of the Fountains) with Parkview and Verde River, helped by creative zoning, sidewalks, and more.

Identifying an accessible, safe connection to Fountain Park from the AOTF/Saguaro intersection is vital for safety and to complete this key economic development vision.

Gayle Earle (council)

The Avenue of the Fountains is already beautifully attractive; I look forward to continued improvements.

I attended the Fountain Hills Downtown Strategy Open House where residents gave feedback regarding options for improvement.

The results of this survey will be presented to the Town Council in September; I look forward to the results.

There are a few items I believe would make the downtown safer and more attractive to pedestrians/shoppers and business.

For pedestrian safety, I suggest Hawk (High-Intensity Activated crossWalk) Signals installed at crosswalks especially the roundabout. Also, reflective pavement markers added to the roundabout center island like what is on Shea Boulevard. Adding sidewalks on both sides of Parkview Avenue.

To assist our businesses, wayfinding signage along with continuing to improve the sign ordinance to help shoppers find them. Restaurants utilizing more outdoor seating with awnings. I enjoy the murals on the transformer boxes and support this in the future. The town should require vacant lot maintenance with higher standards.

Gerry Friedel (mayor)

Fountain Hills has great potential to be strategically positioned for continued economical, cultural and social growth. We have heard from residents and businesses alike that they would like improvements to our downtown. Additional shade structures, seating and lighting along the downtown area have been identified, and would attract residents, tourists and visitors alike. We already have many of the key components that make our town ideal for attracting people to Fountain Hills. We have businesses and community activities that attract people from beyond the town of Fountain Hills. We have green parkways, restaurants, good outdoor exercise routes that all ages of our population can feel safe using, mixed housing-commercial areas, light industrial spaces, good lighting, and bike routes. We have opportunities to further expand on what we already have, and to market these attributes more aggressively.

Certainly, the completion of Park Place II and III would complete the appearance of the Avenue. For Parkview, there has been talk about adding sidewalks, lighting and perhaps more trees. Signage is important as we look at how to get people to our downtown shopping area and entertainment district. It is also important to have parking available and convenient for our businesses.

Henry Male (council)

We've done an outstanding job facilitating a beautiful area surrounding the Fountain Park. This area provides enhanced shopping plus entertainment for residents and visitors. Continuing those efforts for our other parks and retail centers seems like a natural next step. More gathering spots under attractive pergolas or trees will augment our businesses.

Wednesday Market Day, lakeside performances, annual art fairs, and holiday events all offer enrichment for locals and visitors. Other events staged around town would help define FH as a true destination. Currently under construction, the observatory is our next crown jewel which will attract even more visitors and residents. Perhaps a theater district or more regional events using our fields? For 'Naturally Fountain Hills', maybe an expansion of our botanical garden on FH Blvd.

Most businesspeople need staffing. According to the Chamber of Commerce only .02% of the town is looking for a job. It is tough to fill new employment opportunities if there isn't a workforce to draw from. That's a compelling reason we need more full-time residents. For FH to

thrive, we need more housing options available for the clerks, wait servers, etc., to support not only growth but to also sustain our current businesses.

Peggy McMahon (council)

The town recently held a Downtown Strategic Plan Open House. They invited our residents and businesses to select improvements that would make our downtown more user friendly and offer more business opportunities. The event was well attended. Dozens of residents and business owners selected their preferred improvements for revitalizing our downtown.

The most highly selected choices included new lighting, sidewalk connectivity for improved walkability, shade trees and structures, small pocket parks with benches, parking improvements and unique wayfarer signage. I support this input from our constituents and businesses for use in the new Downtown Strategic Plan.

I believe the suggested improvements will continue to preserve our historic downtown, our cultural heritage and small-town community feel while accommodating more modern needs. I will continue to vote for ways to improve business retention and tourism and the enjoyment of our community. These shared ideas, concepts and innovative improvements will be used to prepare a new Downtown Strategic Plan for Council consideration in September.

Art Tolis (council)

To make our downtown area more attractive to businesses and shoppers, resolving the traffic flow and establishing sufficient parking are crucial steps. A public-private partnership to build a parking garage would enhance accessibility, fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment. Adequate parking is essential for encouraging visitors and ensuring they can easily navigate and enjoy our downtown.

Creating a walkable downtown will contribute to a vibrant atmosphere, making it a desirable destination for both locals and tourists. By transforming our downtown into the “Rodeo Drive of Arizona,” we can attract more visitors, particularly if we link it with popular nearby attractions like Fort McDowell Casino. Providing transportation between these locations can stimulate tourism and boost spending at our local businesses.

Addressing parking and traffic concerns will not only improve the experience for visitors but also garner support from residents. A well-planned parking solution will mitigate congestion and make the area more enjoyable for everyone. By investing in these improvements, we can unlock the potential of our downtown, creating a lively and thriving hub that benefits the entire community.

Robert Wallace (council)

To make downtown Fountain Hills more vibrant and appealing, we can offer tax incentives and grants to small businesses. These financial incentives can help attract new businesses and support existing ones, encouraging economic growth and job creation.

Investing in beautification projects, such as landscaping, public art installations and improved lighting can enhance the aesthetic appeal of downtown, making it a more inviting place for residents and visitors. Hosting regular events like farmers markets, art fairs and music festivals can draw crowds and create a lively atmosphere, promoting local culture and community engagement.

Simplifying the permit and licensing processes can make it easier for entrepreneurs to start and expand their businesses, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and fostering a more business-friendly environment. Improving parking availability is also crucial, as convenient parking can significantly influence peoples' willingness to visit downtown areas. By implementing these strategies, we can create a dynamic and attractive downtown area that serves as a hub of activity and a source of pride for our community.

Rick Watts (council)

Town Council in collaboration with the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce (FHCC) must continue to work towards finding creative, outside the box, ways to support all businesses both inside and outside of the immediate downtown area, encouraging residents to utilize our local partners. Businesses outside of the immediate downtown area must not be forgotten and must also be supported.

A few thoughts to consider to assist local businesses:

*Creation of a web page on the Fountain Hills town government website mirroring the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce website listing all businesses holding Town Fountain Hills business licenses.

*Development of an Interactive smart phone map app with links to business details and specials.

*Incentives for residents to support TAMA businesses. Punch cards come to mind that offer a nominal discount after 10 uses or for Arizona residents.

*Encouraging all local businesses to join the TAMA organization.

*Consideration by the Town Council to add covered parking along the Avenue.

*Developing and adding promotions and events that encourage residents to patronize businesses during the cooler evening hours after the sunset.

*TAMA-supported advertising through the local newspaper at discounted rates.

*Multiple EV charging stations.

*Innovate – Motivate – Elevate.

Joe Arpaio (mayor)

Our downtown area can be more attractive to businesses and shoppers with a few simple steps: Improve traffic flow and parking. The need for a parking garage is inevitable to improve accessibility and pedestrian safety and access. Traffic jams during events can also be mitigated. Events and festivals are great, but we need more attractions like the Dark Sky Discovery Center, which I supported. Work with Fort McDowell Casino and share tourists. Fountain Hills has fabulous views, an amazing world-famous fountain and friendly people. It is important to garner tourist dollars. Note: I understand how important tourism is to the community. My wife Ava and I started a travel/tour company 43 years ago. I own several properties and businesses in Fountain Hills. Also, my global recognition will have a local impact and will position Fountain Hills as a promising destination for business, investments and employees.

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