

**CITY COMMISSION ELECTION 2015**

**Candidate Questionnaire**

**Nathaniel Birdsong, Jr.**

**1. (Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.)**

- **Responsible Economic Growth and Sustainability**
- **Enhanced Employment Opportunities**
- **Viable Infrastructure and Transportation Advancements**
- **Preservation of our Natural Resources and Quality of Life for all Residents**

**2. (What is the number-one opportunity facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would propose paying for it?)**

The number one opportunity facing Winter Haven remains forward-thinking Economic development as we capitalize on our geographic appeal to businesses and corporations, without compromising the charm of our small-town atmosphere to current and prospective residents. It is critical that we continue to plan strategically to capitalize on the vast number of economic development opportunities that are already within our community, as well as potential ones to come.

The expanded growth of Legoland, the CSX Intermodal Facility, Wall –to-Wall Academies at Winter Haven High School, and the interest in development of the downtown core has been strategically planned and executed over the past 15 years. In order for our city to continue making such great strides, we must remain focused on updating and advancing our infrastructure, new modes of transportation models, investing in our neighborhoods beyond the downtown core, and helping businesses grow our economy.

As a responsible elected official, I must continue to work with the administration to find resources through federal/state/other entities, (such as TPO, Florida Parks and Recreation funding, infrastructure improvement dollars, etc.), and through the City budgeting process, to ensure the availability of financial resources to accomplish the goals of the elected body.

**3. (What is the number-one challenge facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would propose paying for it?)**

The greatest challenge facing Winter Haven is in keeping up with our explosive growth. As we continue to witness that expansive development transpiring in the Southeast area of our city, we must continue to find ways to improve the Cypress Gardens Corridor. Such will include, but not

Nat Birdsong

be limited to, constructing and annexation plan that effectively addresses impacting issues regarding some of the areas that are not currently inside of our city's boundaries. We must also engage some of our historic neighborhoods in identifying ways to revitalize through the application of municipal codes and much-needed neighborhood improvement projects.

4. (What areas of City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?)

Natural Resources; Growth Management (Planning); Finance, and Utilities.

5. (What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about?)

I am very familiar with our city's municipal operations. However, I have always been, and will always remain, receptive to professional development opportunities; new & innovative ideas, and constructive input from my colleagues and the citizens of this community, whom I am seated to represent.

6. (What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most agree with and why?)

I cannot pinpoint one particular decision. What I absolutely believe is that the Commission, as an elected body, has the responsibility to act in ways that are not self-serving or beneficial to a select few. Rather, City Commissioners must protect and advance the whole of the City of Winter Haven.

As an elected official, I appreciate that I am responsible for, and accountable to the citizens of this city. Therefore, I never take decision-making lightly.

I am deliberate, thorough, fair, equitable, objective, and ethical in my consideration of all options.

7. (What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most disagree with and why?)

My record is clear. I support economic development, responsible growth and Business expansion, quality of life initiatives for citizens, and taking care of our workforce.

8. (How do you define a business-friendly city? How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?)

In my opinion, a business-friendly city is one that consistently seeks to create and maintain the best possible business climate; where the needs of the citizenry are met, and in which the municipal government is responsive to the constant demands of ever-improving such a pro-business environment.

As a City Commissioner, I will continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council to responsibly attract, recruit, welcome, nurture and support businesses and industry that meet the needs and high standards of our community, (via products, services, and employment opportunities); ones conducive to the advancement of the City's strategic mission of growing maintaining a viable economy.

**9. (How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?)**

The City of Winter Haven has not raised taxes in over 7 years, nor have we compromised our high standard of delivery of services. In fact, we continue to provide exceptional service at the same level with fewer employees.

As elected officials, it is the Commission's responsibility to make tough choices when necessary to protect and represent the best interest and well-being of Winter Haven. It is wherefore crucial that we have a strategic plan in place to clearly define our direction as leaders, and to provide a roadmap for the future that is transparent to tax-payers. I believe that this builds awareness and trust.

**10. (In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?)**

I envision our city's diverse population enjoying a robust economy, capitalizing of modern technological trends in transportation, housing, medical care, education & training, communication and jobs. New residential and commercial growth will expand on the Cypress Gardens Corridor. Historic neighborhoods will experience resurgence in our Northeast sector, and an expansion of offerings in both the public and private sector will be abundant.

Also, in 5 to 7 years from now, I see a 74 - 76 year old native son still giving his greatest service to ensure that his hometown is the very best it can be for all citizens of Winter Haven and for residents yet unborn.

Kemp Brinson

City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire \_ Kemp Brinson

**1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.**

When was the last time you were excited about your City Commissioners? When was the last time you described them as “energetic” or “proactive”?

I will be an energetic and proactive advocate for Winter Haven at City Hall and in every other forum available to me.

My approach to governing will emphasize concerted strategic planning and rigorous efficiency. I will focus on three major policy areas:

- Water Resources – we have a great Sustainable Water Management Plan, but we lack the political leadership to fully implement it.
- Recreation and Culture – as Chairman of the Board of Theatre Winter Haven, I truly understand the economic value of recreation and culture
- Infrastructure – we can do better at planning ahead for growth and advocating for Winter Haven outside of City Hall

I will also leverage technology to be the most transparent city commissioner in Winter Haven history. I hope that you will be excited to say, “I voted for Kemp!”

**2. What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?**

I reject that premise that any one opportunity is “number one”. Our most important opportunities include:

- Economic development associated with Legoland and the Integrated Logistics Center;
- Increased tourism for sports and cultural attractions, events, and conventions;
- Participating in the growth of a region, not just of a city.

I would help realize these opportunities by:

Kemp Brinson

- Being a prepared, outspoken advocate for Winter Haven, in partnership with groups like the Winter Haven Economic Development Council and Central Florida Development Council;
- Being a thought leader on regional boards and councils on behalf of the City;
- In partnership with the City Manager, helping lead Winter Haven through concerted strategic planning that helps bridge the gap between our vision and our day-to-day actions, especially for recreation and cultural facilities.

I would seek to generate new revenue to pay for new initiatives and projects primarily by:

- Being a champion of efficiency, continuing the work I helped start as co-chair of the Citizen's Efficiency Committee;
- Realizing the growth in the tax base that will naturally result if we are our own best advocates and plan properly.

**3. What is the number-one challenge facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?**

Our most important challenges include:

- Inadequate existing transportation planning and infrastructure;
- Aging water infrastructure built in an era before we understood the value of natural systems;
- Historic lack of more concerted, coordinated growth management planning, especially in the southeast.

Some of the big-picture visions and plans required to address these challenges are already in place or in the works, such as the City's Sustainable Water Management Plan, the pending draft transportation plan, and the Winter Haven Economic Development Council's study of the Cypress Gardens Boulevard corridor. Strategic planning can turn long-term visions like these into immediate action. I will advocate for:

Kemp Brinson

- Strategic planning to advance our transportation and water resource plans;
- Harder work at the political level to bring together the county and other municipalities to implement regional planning and economic development efforts.

**4. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?**

As an attorney with experience in employment, real estate, and commercial litigation, I am well-equipped to understand the City's:

- legal issues,
- employment-related matters, and
- real estate dealings.

I also have an engineering degree which is helpful with highly technical issues like utilities, water management, construction projects, and transportation.

As co-chair of the Citizen's Efficiency Committee, I acquired basic background knowledge about most City departments.

**5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about?**

All of them!

All City Commissioners are expected to complete an initial orientation, but I intend to make that a continuous effort. With the City Manager's permission, I will spend at least a day or two a month meeting with and shadowing City staff, department by department. I want to ride a garbage truck, join a utility crew fixing an emergency water leak, spend a shift with a fire crew, and help account services employees handle customer requests. I want staff at every level to know me on sight and call me by my first name.

**6. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why?**

Votes taken are less important than causes championed. Commissioners should not get credit for merely asking questions and then deciding to vote “yea”. Instead, I give individual Commissioners the most credit for individual decisions they have made that represent proactive, energetic leadership and advocacy. For example:

- Commissioner Dantzler’s championing of the Cultural Arts Advisory Committee;
- Mayor Birdsong’s international advocacy for Winter Haven in conjunction with the Winter Haven Economic Development Council.

These are not the most important actions taken by the Commission, but citizens and staff, not the Commission, deserve the credit for the major big ideas and projects that that have significantly moved our city forward over the past two years. There is nothing wrong with citizen and staff-led initiatives, but we need commissioners who are more proactive leaders more often.

**7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why?**

The “decisions” I most disagree with are all the times a commissioner has:

- Failed to devote his time and energy to being the best advocate for Winter Haven he could possibly be;
- Failed to adequately prepare for meetings;
- Failed to be engaged with and learn from staff outside of meetings;
- Failed to be transparent and accessible to citizens.

**8. How do you define a business-friendly city? How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?**

Our City must:

Kemp Brinson

- Be customer-service driven at all levels, as the Citizen's Efficiency Committee that I co-chaired recommended;
- Prove to new businesses that we are well-prepared for the growth we are likely to experience;
- Become known for making smart, bold decisions.

Any business with issues before the Commission or City staff should leave city hall thinking, "Wow, they were well prepared, asked questions that mattered, and dealt with that issue quickly, fairly, and thoughtfully."

I will move Winter Haven in the right direction for business by:

- Always preparing thoroughly for meetings, including studying business-related issues in advance so the discussion at the meeting can be high-level and productive;
- Demanding strategic planning and efficiency.

**9. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?**

Concerted strategic planning is the key. Today, we tend to spend money when we have it and spend it on whatever is politically expedient at the moment. This is not efficient.

We should see the need for investment coming years in advance and consider how to pay for it just as proactively. If we are more careful and more strategic in our approach, we can keep our tax rates competitive while still making the necessary investments.

From day one, with the cooperation of the City Manager, I would take a leadership role in the development of departmental strategic plans and a City-wide strategic plan, as recommended by the Citizen's Efficiency Committee that I co-chaired.

**10. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?**

Kemp Brinson

My mid-term vision for Winter Haven is ambitious, but not outside the realm of possibility. Please join me in helping create it:

- Our Commission has transformed itself into a body with a reputation for being well-prepared, hard-working, and astute. Commissioners are accessible and responsive to citizens online, in person, and by phone, and citizens and staff feel connected to Commissioners.
- We have 5-10 year strategic plans in place for each of our City Departments and for the Commission – they provide a framework for our major decisions and budgets. The plans are referenced regularly at meetings and each one is formally reviewed at least quarterly. Progress is documented.
- After five years of concerted advocacy and negotiations, a version of our own Sustainable Water Resource Management Plan has been adopted for the Peace River/Peace Creek headwaters by the City, the County, LRLMD, SWFWMD, and other local municipalities. Throughout this crucial area, government agencies will use incentive-oriented development planning to increase the capacity of our wetlands and creeks to store runoff and wastewater within the headwaters. The long-term future of our water resources is looking more hopeful.
- Transportation projects have been prioritized. Decisions have been made about how our long-term transportation needs will be met 5-10 years in advance. We have a plan in place to make those improvements and a solid idea of how they will be paid for. Improvements by the state and county have been prioritized and long-term lobbying efforts are underway to make them happen.
- We have made major renovations and expansions to our recreational and cultural facilities. In addition to increasing recreational and cultural opportunities for local residents, these facilities are being leveraged by partner organizations to attract state, national, and international festivals, competitions, and conferences in sports, theatre, music, dance, and the visual arts for children and adults, as well as business conferences.

I am truly excited about the opportunities we have together, and I hope you will be excited to say “I voted for Kemp!”

Macy Butler

City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire

1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.
  - ✚ Bruh, I've been here the whole time.
  - ✚ Systemic Discrimination in Winter Haven.
  - ✚ I'm just waiting on Winter Haven to catch up.
  - ✚ My work speaks for itself.
  - ✚ Taylor Pursell
2. What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it? **Public-Private Partnership-The Caribbean Markets on Lake Smart. Income/Career Generator self-sufficient project-income generator.**
3. What is the number-one *challenge* facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? **Cut quarter-million dollar salary by retiring Cal Bowen, Terminate the multi-million dollar contracts with John Murphy.**
4. If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?
5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand? **Systemic Discrimination in public operations, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Utility Services, Ordinances and Municipal Codes.**

Macy Butler

6. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about? **Contracting Consultants, we seem spend a lot of money on them.**
7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why? **N/A**
8. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why? **A two-million dollar bridge to nowhere, I've yet to see anyone walk across it.**
9. How do you define a business-friendly city? **Hospitality**
10. How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly? **Address and correct Systemic City-wide Discrimination.**
11. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life? **By utilizing our vast resources to promote sports marketing tournaments and The Caribbean Markets on Lake Smart**
12. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years? **If we continue to re-elect to same people sued, bankrupted and a city ran by Taylor Pursell.**

Pete Chichetto

## City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire

1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.
  - Fiscally Conservative Leadership
  - Committed to making Winter Haven a better place to live, work and raise a family
  - Bring back our neighborhoods
  - Focused on Public Safety and Economic Development
  - Balanced representation for our citizens
  
2. What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?
  - Expanding the taxable value of the City of Winter Haven  

This cost's the tax payers no money and is done by annexation, simplifying the permitting process and enforcing our code on properties that need to be cleaned up through aggressive code enforcement. If we focus on these efforts the taxable value will grow through increased property values and expansion of our tax base.
  
3. What is the number-one *challenge* facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?
  - The budget  

The most recent adopted budget is just over \$90 million dollars. There are \$13.3 million in new projects that are long overdue for the City.

Pete Chichetto

These projects are primarily recreation in nature and do not include any money for future road projects, sidewalks, street lights, fire station for South East Winter Haven or our lakes. If we continue without real planning then we will end up in a financial mess.

We need to annex property, clean up our existing neighborhoods using the tools we have in place through code enforcement and make it easier to build new projects. This will allow our tax base to rise faster than it has and provide enough funding to sustain what we are doing and prioritize funding for additional programs and projects.

4. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?

- I have a great understanding of the City's municipal operations as a whole. I have a master's degree in Public Administration and almost 20 years of experience in County and City government. I managed several departments for the City of Winter Haven and provide insight to the Commission and staff based on experiences that I encountered over the years.

5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about?

- Even with almost 20 years of experience in County and City government, I will always continue to learn. I am in frequent communication with our City Manager discussing most facets of our

Pete Chichetto

operations, however, if there is one area that I need to learn more about it would be solid waste.

Solid waste is a critical part of the City and has some great employees. Recently the City implemented one day a week garbage collection. I would study this area to see if we are being as efficient as possible and look for ways to give back to our Citizens through a reduction in garbage fees.

6. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why?

- The funding of \$13.3 million dollars of improvements, while eliminating fire fee. The improvements are: Sertoma Park renovation, Lake Maude sports complex, South Park renovation, 7<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape, new tennis facility, splash pad for Trailhead Park and a skate park. They are all funded without raising taxes and without a fire fee.

7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why?

- The funding of the Lake Howard trail. This project nearly doubled in price and will never have contiguous connectivity all the way around Lake Howard. It was a decision that was not fiscally responsible with tax payer dollars. No business person would pay double for a service when it can be done cheaper and more efficient elsewhere, so why is the City any different. A downtown traffic study shows that Lake

Pete Chichetto

Howard is heavily traveled and may need to be expanded in the future. At the very minimum intersection improvements will need to be made and a walking/bike trail should be in an area with less traffic and on a lake that citizens can walk ALL the way around, similar to Lake Hollingsworth in Lakeland.

8. How do you define a business-friendly city? How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?

- A business-friendly city can be defined as Winter Haven. Winter Haven's staff has worked increasingly hard to provide greater customer service and in a more timely manner.
- To make Winter Haven "more business-friendly," we all need to remember that time=money. We need to continue the focus of shortening the review process and the expedition of building permits.

9. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?

- The last four years the City has had some challenging times dealing with little or no increases in our tax base and one of the worst recessions in our Cities history. These years have made Winter Haven stronger as a City. This is because we have become more efficient and found ways to do more with less. The taxes were never raised, yet the levels of service never went down. Once a City of almost 550 employees is now down to 460. There were tough choices that we made to go without new buildings, new city vehicles and new parks,

Pete Chichetto

but the leadership on the Commission did what it took to provide public safety, provide clean parks, provide over 100 special events for all to enjoy and maintain a high level of service to our residents. Now we have made it through the recession without new fees or tax increases and find ourselves in a stronger financial position than years before. The current year's budget shows a significant increase in taxable value because people are investing again in real estate. Now it is the Cities turn to give back to all our citizens and have done this by passing the budget with \$13.3 million dollars of new projects. These improvements are just the beginning to where we are capable of going, but it will take a strong commissioner like me to watch out for our tax dollars and assure the public we are being conservative with our budgets, programs and projects.

10. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?

- In 5-7 years the City will have a whole new look. I envision the expansion of Central Park to the South. This one project will totally change downtown through the construction of a new outdoor band shell for holding concerts and community events. It will include additional downtown parking and other amenities for all to enjoy. The intermodal facility (CSX project) will be up and running at near capacity. This is the economic engine that will be employing thousands of people. Legoland will be competing with Disney for the number one tourist attraction in Florida. We will have multiple hotels

Pete Chichetto

for all to stay in without having to go back to Orlando or Tampa. There will be several new restaurants, breweries, pubs and places to entertain visitors with throughout the City. Finally, we will have sidewalks and street lights in all of our neighborhoods. This will bring back our neighborhoods and enhance our quality of life. It will take strong leaders to work with the business community to achieve these goals.

I have proven to the community that my leadership has been in the best interest for Winter Haven. I have been committed to making Winter Haven better than it was before and will continue to work hard for everyone.

## City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire

Carmelo Garcia

**Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.**

A good platform begins with a strong understanding on the issues surrounding the community and the people living in it.

- **Safety-** Is the most important component of running a City where people want to live work and play. We have to make sure our law enforcement officers have everything they need to do their jobs efficiently.
- **Education-** Although commissioners don't have anything to do with the school system directly, they can indirectly impact the education of our students and make sure they have what they need to grow up strong, healthy and informed...
- **Recreation-** We live in a very beautiful City with multiple lakes, parks and LEGO LAND. We can be a tourist destination for all ages if we can implement new and fresh ideas. If we keep doing the same ole thing over and over we will get the same results.
- **Children-** The future are our children, we must take care of them and make sure that they also have what they need in their homes to be prepared to receive their education. More involvement from the city with programs to better their quality of life.
- **Residents-** The heart of our city are our residents. Without them we won't have a city as beautiful as this one. That's why all elected official have to listen to the people and serve them, listen to them and work hard to make sure they are heard and valued. We, as elected officials, serve the people, not the people serving the elected officials...

**What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity?**

There are more than one opportunity facing Winter Haven, and we can take full advantage of these opportunities without having the City pay for it with tax dollars. Just to mention a few, Chain of Lakes Complex, Nora Mayo Hall, and the building of a City Civic Center. We can do all of this and spend minimal tax payers dollars.

If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

I do not plan to use city investments.

**What is the number-one *challenge* facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge?**

Speaking as a resident and then an entrepreneur the *lack of leadership* and decision making from some of our elected officials is a huge problem facing the people of Winter Haven. An elected official has to do his job, even if it is a part time position, and make sure the position he or she was elected to do is done before any vacations or leisure time can be taken. Aside from faulty leadership we have transportation and infrastructure issues we need to make better for our citizens. Utility company fees are excessive and need to be addressed. Also the City of Winter Haven needs to address the issue with TECO and Tampa Electric, another company pushing excessive fees to our residents. I plan to address these issues directly with the people and make our voices heard.

If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

No need to use City resources for these issues...

Carmelo Garcia

**What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?**

I feel I understand how the City Municipalities work. Back when I lived in Kissimmee I took a Government class that explained how a city operates and all of the hard work that goes into having a proficient operating city.

**What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about?**

All though I know about how a city is ran, I would love to learn how Winter Haven is ran. If given the opportunity I would love to see the behind the scenes operations of this wonderful city...

**What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why?**

The contract cancelation of the Landings Company that was going to take over the chain of Lakes complex. That was a good decision that served and benefited the people of Winter Haven. When a company says they are going to do something that is what we expect them to do, not change their minds mid way. I agree 100% on that decision.

**What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why?**

Back in May of 2015 the commissioners made a decision to approve a \$134,000 dollar project to improve parks like Lake Shipp Park, Girl Scout Park, Rotary Park and Lake Hartridge Nature Park. I believe this was a bad decision. I also believe that these organizations like the Rotary and the Girl Scouts should also contribute to the repairs of these parks in the community. The City should not write or agree to writing checks this big to repair or reface any park without the participation of local community organizations that are fully capable of making at least half of the price tag.

**How do you define a business-friendly city?**

I will quote G. Clark and J. Huxley, "Explicit attempts to reduce the barriers, costs, risks and uncertainties of all forms of commercial activity to stimulate and support local business growth, local business retention, and the attraction of new business to the local area." This is what needs to be done to have a business friendly city. Knowing that we will have to bring thousands of new jobs, new residents, and new dwellings to house the new residents.

**How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?**

I cannot do this on my own. If elected by the people of Winter Haven I will work with the other four commissioners closely to make sure we can set forth a plan that will ensure this business friendly city in the future.

**How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?**

- **Provide essential community services:** Providing timely, efficient City permitting and regulatory functions and safe, high-quality public amenities and infrastructure are essential to creating an environment for successful investment and development. When we do our part to provide these services, others can make investments that create jobs.

Carmelo Garcia

- **Meet community goals and values:** We also must be sure our economic growth is sustainable and carefully balanced with other community values, such as protecting and enhancing our environment and preserving our quality of life.
- **Rely on strategic partnerships:** We are fortunate to have many capable potential partners who by working together can support and contribute to a healthy economy. These potential partners will come from and throughout the public, private and nonprofit sector.
- **Retain our businesses:** While as a Winter Haven City Commissioner I would want to attract new businesses, it is important first to retain the businesses we have. I would ask businesses about their experiences with the City, and make it our goal to make our regulatory path consistent, predictable and fair.

**In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?**

The City of Winter Haven in 5 to 7 years from now would have a newly renovated Chain of Lakes Complex complete with new score board, sound system, and renovated pool along with other additions and renovations. Local businesses will be thriving with the partnerships made by the city with our Lego Land theme park and established business relationships with new companies.

James Hogan

City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire

1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.

Economic growth through responsible incentives, which allows the community to realize its impact in the shortest timeframe.

To magnify our efforts in making Winter Haven as a destination for athletic competition, so we may compete with the surrounding areas.

To utilize what we learned in promoting the immediate downtown area and extend those things into surrounding corridors so they too can become part of the city's enhancement.

2. What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

Continued efforts in bringing in businesses that are in line with the CXS project. Responsible incentives that keeps us competitive, but allows a quicker economic impact.

3. What is the number-one *challenge* facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

The Landings litigation. (Not make that mistake again)

4. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?

Utilities

5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about? **Law enforcement**
6. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why? **The decision to move forward with its Capital Projects list, because it will enhance those areas and provide new or upgraded facilities.**
7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why?
8. How do you define a business-friendly city? How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly? **I think Winter Haven has shown itself to be business friendly, but again we must be able to realize a return on whatever incentives we offer up.**
9. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life? **The infrastructure and the quality of life is at the heart of what the individuals look at when deciding where to live. I think the tax rate is secondary.**
10. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?  
**I would hope to see the downtown prosperity to have continued, but also flowed into those corridors leading into it. I think we will continue to have opportunities to bring in new businesses into the area. I look to have more athletic and entertainment events, there by exposing the city to more tourist and potential residents.**

Bob Jardine—seat -2 september 30, 2015

- 1- Serve the city with good faith, without any special interest in background. Use more caution when signing any contracts. No unnecessary spending with lawsuit hanging over one's head.
- 2- Opportunity. Don't forget the city has a major lawsuit facing them, that should be number one at the top of the list to pay .
- 3- Once again the lawsuit. If we do not have the money in the bank, I would sell city property or try to barter.
- 4- A.D.A. requirements, code enforcement, public transportation, fire service, water management.
- 5- Planning and filing for grants.
- 6- New fire house on highway 17 northwest, as the old one was not up standards. Putting in new sidewalks and street paving that was well needed.
- 7- Landings deal, mismanaged
- 8- Planning and Development is the key to success in the downtown area by targeting a variety of businesses that will be long-term occupants to attract repeat customers.
- 9- No comment
- 10- It is impossible to forecast the economic future, but I would like to see the Landings lawsuit resolved, consistent and reliable bus transportation for all, and a fully occupied downtown that will allow for growth in other areas.

1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.

•€City Government is primarily responsible for the safety of its citizens; therefore our Police and Fire Departments are the first priority.

•€Government should do its best to encourage and assist local businesses to grow and create jobs for its citizens.

•€The quality of life in Winter Haven depends on us protecting our environment and encouraging diverse activities that attract a broad range of people.

•€Well-planned, targeted government investment will generate private investment many times what government spends.

•€Winter Haven is the hub from which east Polk County will grow in the next 20 years, and we need to accept, prepare and move forward with that perspective.

2. What is the number-one *opportunity* facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

**A: East Polk will be the growth engine for the county over the next two decades and Winter Haven will be the hub for that growth. We need to be prepared by making investments in infrastructure, both in Public Works / Public Safety as well as quality of life projects such as Parks and recreation. I feel that a Bond Issue would be a prudent way to fund these investments as they are long term investments and with interest rates as low as they are, the finance costs would be reasonable.**

3. What is the number-one *challenge* facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

**A: The city is still feeling the effects of the 2008 Real Estate recession. The City currently collects \$4.8 million (Annually) in Property Taxes than in 2008, and property values are \$600 Million less. We need to continue to encourage commercial development to boost that figure. Any city investments (roads, water sewer) would more than be paid for by increased enterprise revenues and ad valorem taxes from the new property.**

4. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand?

**A: In my (nearly) eight years as City Commissioner, I have had a chance to learn about all of the City Departments, from the Police Department to Solid Waste.**

5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about?

**A: It is the job of a City Commissioner to continually educate himself about municipal operations. Over the next four years, I plan to spend time increasing my knowledge of all of our departments in order to do my job better.**

6. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *agree* with and why?

**A: The decision to give our employees raises in the last budget. It was important to show them that we as commissioners appreciate their hard work over the last few years of difficult financial times for the city. Our employees are our**

**biggest investment, and we need to do all we can to lower turnover. I believe what we did will help in that respect.**

7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most *disagree* with and why?

**A: The decision to cancel the public hearing on the Fire Fee. Regardless of where you stood on the merits of imposing the fee, cancelling the Public hearing simply prevented arguments from being made on the merits on both sides of the issue. It made no sense to do that after all of the expense had been incurred to prepare for the hearing.**

8. How do you define a business-friendly city?

**A: A business-friendly city is one that has a reputation for fairness and consistency in its regulations, has a strong customer service attitude among its staff, and remembers that business drives economic growth and jobs, not government.**

How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?

**A: Continue to focus staff on customer service, be responsive and flexible to business requests as long as they don't interfere with quality of life issues. Continue to encourage redevelopment in blighted areas.**

9. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?

**A: Increased commercial property investment will increase ad valorem revenues. By holding the tax rate steady we can take advantage of these increasing revenues. The city has bonding capacity to make the investments. We have seen with the Downtown CRA the direct multiplier between public and private investment.**

10. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?

**A: The City has grown in size and population. We have added many industrial businesses to the CSX ILC and the Core Improvement Area within the city has seen a rebirth. The city's music and arts community is thriving with the South Central Park concert stage, the Derry Down and the Ritz Theater drawing audiences. The City's parks continue to flourish with major investments having been made throughout the city. Winter Haven is recognized as a center of educational excellence, with many options for students in the K-12 range. Polk State College has grown their Bachelors programs as well. The Cypress Gardens Blvd corridor is developing under a City-County master plan. Small business are thriving and providing jobs to graduating students entering the workforce. We are continuing to provide a safe and convenient public transit system that accommodates future growth along with better roads, efficient traffic flow management, and expanded trails and sidewalks.**

**Last but certainly not least, our Chain of Lakes continues to be the jewel in our crown, supporting recreation and wildlife throughout our City.**

William Twyford

Chamber questionnaire

City Commission Election 2015: Candidate Questionnaire

1. Please summarize your campaign platform in 3-5 key bullet points.

- Establish a strategic plan.
- Safety first. We must furnish our police and fire departments the resources they need to provide first class safety to our community.
- Fiscal responsibility is the key for Winter Haven to capitalize on future opportunities.
- We must address the out of control expense of the general pension fund.

2. What is the number-one opportunity facing Winter Haven and how would you help realize that opportunity? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

The number one opportunity facing Winter Haven is to capitalize on the economic development happening in and around Winter Haven. We must manage the budget so the city can provide the services and infrastructure that will attract successful professionals to work and live in our city. I would pay for this by better management of the current and future income and expenditures.

3. What is the number-one challenge facing Winter Haven and how would you help address that challenge? If your plan includes City investment, how would you propose paying for it?

The number one challenge facing the city is bringing an end to The Landings saga. The city has already accumulated over a million dollars in legal fees with no end in sight.

4. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you best understand? As an attorney I feel I best understand Legal, Finance, and Community Services.

5. What areas of the City's municipal operations do you feel you need to learn more about? Human Resources and Executive Services.

6. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most agree with and why?

Not to institute a Fire Tax. The city sold land to CSX for \$14 million dollars. The city sells \$24 million dollars of water a year. The city raises water rates 2.5% every year automatically. That is plenty of money to provide first class services and infrastructure. My opponent was the only commissioner to vote FOR the Fire Tax and voted FOR raising water rates 2.5% every year automatically.

7. What City Commission decision in the last two years do you most disagree with and why?

The Landings project and not settling The Landings lawsuit. This black cloud has hung over our city for three years. The city has accumulated over a million dollars in legal fees with no end in sight. The city's \$10 million dollar partnership with the Board of County Commission to build a recreation facility on the

William Twyford

Chain of Lakes property hangs in the balance. This money is constantly at risk because of these regretful decisions.

8. How do you define a business-friendly city? How would you make Winter Haven more business-friendly?

A business friendly community provides support from a zoning and permitting standpoint. Permitting should be seamless process that should be accomplished at the pace of the citizen. Zoning should protect land owner rights while at the same time provide aesthetically pleasing growth. A business friendly community should benefit from a city that manages their budget every year in order to provide first class services and infrastructure.

9. How would you balance a competitive tax rate with the need for investment in the community's infrastructure and quality of life?

Proper management of current income from existing competitive tax rates can meet the community's needs for proper infrastructure and quality of life. I would better manage the general pension fund. Since 2008 the general pension fund has cumulatively cost our city \$12.8 million dollars. This is unsustainable. The commission voted in 2013 to increase the water fund transfer to the general fund from \$3 million dollars to \$6 million dollars. This was done to pay recurring expenses such as the general pension obligation. The city currently has 40% general pension fund obligation. That means for every dollar the city pays its general pension fund employees it has to pay an addition forty cents to the pension fund. Clearly this is unsustainable. Currently our tax rate is competitive. We sell \$24 million dollars of water a year. We raise water fees 2.5% every year automatically. The garbage department contributes on average \$1 million dollars a year to the general fund. Proper investment in of the community's money can be made with proper direction.

10. In your opinion, what does the City of Winter Haven look like in 5-7 years?

In 5-7 years the city has annexed additional land to realize the tax benefits. The Chain of Lakes property has world-class recreation facilities funded thru a partnership with the Board of County Commissioners. This growth has spurred the construction of a first class hotel on Lake Lulu. The city is able to balance the budget without raiding the water fund to the tune of \$6 million dollars a year. These savings are put toward much needed infrastructure upgrades and maintenance and solidifying our police and fire departments. The commission has evolved to come together to provide specific leadership to the city manager and staff. Our strategic plan is in place and serves as a blue print for our citizens to know and understand the direction of their city. All this comes together to make the Winter Haven community the envy of not just our neighboring communities but the entire state and nation.