

**The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
Springfield City Council Candidate Survey
February 8, 2011**

**Joe McMenamin
Ward 7
787-2297**



1. Why are you running for city council?

Am running to:

- Refocus City government to strengthen neighborhoods.
- Reinstate the city residency requirement for our police and city employees.
- Strengthen and enforce ordinances related to problem properties.
- Establish a long-term sewer improvement and financing plan for neighborhoods.
- End municipal pension abuses.
- Add sidewalk and/or improved shoulders along parts of Old Jacksonville Rd. west of Washington Park.

2. What are your plans to help spur economic development in our community?

Springfield is the home to State and County government, has a quantity of tourism sites, is surrounded by rich agricultural land, is a regional retail center, possesses significant medical institutions, and several higher education campuses. With these assets, it is not surprising Springfield has the second lowest unemployment rate in the state. As difficult as our economic challenges are, they are worse elsewhere.

I will focus economic development and renewal at the neighborhood level. We need to keep our neighborhoods and their commercial corridor entry ways attractive and prosperous. Whereas Downtown Springfield benefits from its own TIF producing \$5 million annually for exclusively downtown projects, many of our neighborhoods are suffering neglect and some abandonment.

I favor a city residency requirement for City employees, with a grandfather clause for those that have already left, a 6 month grace periods for new hires, and a hardship waiver opportunity. The residency requirement can serve as an economic development tool for Springfield. Since its repeal in year 2000, over 600 of our 1600 City employees have moved out of town. One hundred of our police have left. We want our police living in our

neighborhoods. When there are more sellers than buyers in a market, prices decline, property values fall, and real estate tax revenues suffer. The opposite is true when demand increases. There are 600 fewer families living in the City limits now as the result of the repeal of the city residency requirement. We need to put Springfield first and require City employees to commit to this community and if they do not wish to do so then they can let someone else have that job with its generous benefits and future pension.

The city should collaborate with Memorial and St Johns' to offer financial incentives to Hospital employees to purchase homes near the hospitals. This approach to renewal worked when Notre Dame University partnered with the city of South Bend, IN. Once the city budget allows it, I also will favor financial incentives for our police and fire fighters to move back to the City, with heightened incentives for police to live in problem neighborhoods.

We need to strengthen and enforce ordinances related to problem properties, and create incentives to develop and disincentives to leave "as is" properties such as "old Kmart" on MacArthur Boulevard. We should: increase the registration fees for "boarded buildings" by scaling then to building square footage, and compound fees for "boarded" duration; require City Building and Zoning Department to publish fines and boarded building registration documents on-line—by Ward—to increase accountability; refill the second Code Enforcement attorney position that is now vacant in the Corporation Counsel's office.

We also need a long-term plan and funding source for sewer work in the older neighborhoods. For example, there are some beautiful and expensive older homes near Washington Park that now face raw sewage problems in their basement. This can dissuade buyers when these homes come to the market.

3. Given the current state of the City's finances, what do you propose to do to balance the City's finances while providing essential services?

80% of the city budget goes to payroll and employee benefits. Much of this spending gets locked by unaffordable multi year collective bargaining agreements. It was irresponsible for the mayor and the city council to approve a five-year contract with annual 3.5% pay raises for our fire fighters, going into a recession. Social Security and military retirees who received 0% increases the last two years understand this.

I am a budget hawk, and as a Council member I will restrain City employee pay and benefit increases. Within 60 days of becoming alderman, I will introduce an ordinance to ban abusive pension practices including "retirement week pay spikes" for our firefighters and police which permanently inflate pensions and rob our city of vital financial resources for years to come. All City real estate taxes now go to pay pensions of retired city workers, none to city operations.

4. If services are to be cut, what services do you think should be cut first?

Revenue growth from an improving economy combined with fiscal restraint will allow the city to formulate reasonable budgets without service cuts. Regarding revenue growth, the SJR reported City

sales tax growth for Nov 10 compared to Nov 09 and December 10 compared to December 09 averaging about \$300K.

We need an aggressive clean up of operational waste including bloated work force at CWLP. However, the CWLP budget needs to remain firewalled from other City operations. Operational savings at CWLP will keep utility rates flat.

5. What do you plan on doing, if anything, to help Springfield's reputation of being unfriendly to real estate development?

This is an area where the Chamber can inform the candidates and current council members of problems and make recommendations. Am interested in receiving information from the Chamber on this issue.

6. During your time in office there may be issues that pit the interest of the city against the interest of your ward. What will be your first priority? And how do you balance the two?

A council member's first priority is to advocate and represent the interests of his ward. If that Ward's council member does not, who will? That is the premise of geographic representation. If the interests of the Ward and the interests of the City are adverse, I will generally articulate and vote the Ward's interest. If the City's long-term interests are compelling and the vote is close, I will generally vote the City's overall interest.

7. Please name a specific policy issue you would like to accomplish over the next four years.

Reinstate the City residency requirement for City employees. See the 3rd paragraph above in Question 2.

8. What do you want business owners to know about you?

I am Chamber member and have been so for most of the last 15 years. Am also a thirty year member of the Army National Guard. I was active with the Chamber's "Government Affairs Committee" for several years including Chair in 1997. However, after 9-1-1, the bubble life took over, with constant potential deployments to far away places for unknown durations at unknown times. Most of 2003, 2004, and 2005 involved train-up and then a 12 months boots-on-ground deployment to Afghanistan. Many do not understand the impact of citizen-soldier obligations particularly on the self employed professionals (am an attorney in private practice).

I also want business owners to know that I am one of you, in two senses. I started a solo private law practice from scratch in 1991 (after serving over 10 years in government service as a tax lawyer). So I am an owner of a professional services business. I concentrated on tax and small business matters for many years. I did so without advertizing and relied on word of mouth referrals, the way my grandfather practiced. Back then, lawyers could not advertize as it was contrary to public policy. I am also one of you in that I have worked with scores of businesses to resolve often-complicated issues with reasonable solutions to limit litigation and expense. I worked hard to understand and serve the needs of business clients. I will do the same as alderman for businesses and owners residing in Ward 7 .