

Watchmen Voter Guide for Coeur d'Alene Mayor

** Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire **

	<u>Joe Alfieri</u>	<u>Jim Hammond</u>	<u>Michael Lentz</u>
<p>1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?</p>	<p>Joe Alfieri, and I'm running for Mayor of Coeur d'Alene.</p> <p>I'm running because I'm concerned about the direction the city is headed in, its massive growth, and the erosion of the values that have made it such a wonderful place to live.</p> <p>According to the city's comprehensive plan, the population will grow at 60% over the next 15-20 years. That's irresponsible, and will destroy the quality of life we now enjoy. Under my leadership, we will maintain our city's look and feel by preserving single family zoning, and implementing effective smart, responsible growth. I won't let Coeur d'Alene look like Spokane, or Portland.</p>	<p>Jim Hammond. Mayor of Coeur d'Alene</p> <p>EXPERIENCE MATTERS. I possess the type of leadership to build and sustain a community that celebrates individuals and provides opportunities for those willing to work. My record is one of constructive, respectful, and principled engagement with citizens, staff, and fellow elected officials. My ability to listen, talent to bring people together, and a determination to be productive are the qualities I fostered in my 40+ years of public service. I have been and will be accessible to all constituents.</p>	<p>Michael Lentz. Mayor of Coeur d'Alene.</p> <p>I'm running as the change candidate against two retired republicans. I decided to toss my hat in the race right before the filing deadline when I realized the choices were not good. I'm a young man running against two retired men and an anti-growth candidate against two candidates who will essentially be more of the same.</p>
<p>2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.</p>	<p>Well the first thing I'm going to do is to put a stop to the rezoning that is changing the character of so many areas in the city. I hope to build a coalition among the city council members, if we can elect a group that agrees with me, or if necessary I will use my veto power to stop it.</p> <p>The second thing that I'm going to do is to bring in the heads of each city department and discuss with them what they think their job is, how effective they think they are, and how they can be (or we can be) better at delivering services to the public. I will also challenge them to do so at a lower cost. I will do the same with each of the various non-paid advisory commissions, especially those that have influence on the budget, such as the parking commission. Unnecessary commissions will be eliminated, and I will seek to reduce the size of those that remain.</p> <p>My third item agenda, but perhaps most important, is to conduct a forensic audit of the city's finances. <u>(The remainder of Mr. Alfieri's answer can be seen in his questionnaire)</u></p>	<p>a. Improved traffic flow through collaboration with the Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization</p> <p>b. Seek alternatives to meet housing needs</p>	<p>The city could be improved by having a city government that cares to preserve the community and culture that is our way of life here in North Idaho. Of course, the culture and community is best when government leaves itself out. However, the city and area are beset by outside forces, predatory investment and corporate interest, and the things that are special about our city are quickly disappearing. The city government needs to intervene in the housing market so locals do not continue to be displaced and it needs to advocate for and protect local business. The Mayor is not a legislator but does oversee the heads of departments for the city as well as being the single most able official to have a voice in the leadership and direction of where the city is going. My priorities as mayor will be leadership around responsible growth (a much more rigid, conservative comprehensive growth strategy, attempting to get city council to make the outsiders pay for the growth), and advocacy and protection of local business.</p>

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3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho? How should the mayor manage growth?	<p>Well, I'm very concerned about the growth, as I've said, and it is clearly our number one issue in Coeur d'Alene. While growth is inevitable, it is the character of the growth that is critical. A comparison is putting on weight by drinking six-packs of beer, or working out at the health club to develop muscle. Both add weight, but that's where the similarity ends.</p> <p>We must emphasize smart growth that builds communities, not development of massive tracts of apartments and condominiums. There has been a move in the city council in the last couple of years to rezone single family housing to multi-family and/ or mixed use commercial and residential. The effects of this, which are in line with the city's Coeur Housing / Missing Middle / Infill Housing initiative, as well as its CDA 2030 plan, is to convert CDA from single family housing to four and six story apartments and condominiums. Coeur d'Alene will look like Spokane, or worse yet , Portland. And along with the change in character will be an increase in crime and other social ills that come with urbanization.</p> <p>As mayor, I will stop the rezoning with veto power if needed, and rewrite the comprehensive plan so that it is more in line with the character of our city as it is now.</p>	<p>Our county is founded on the idea of free markets and free movement of citizens from state to state; we can manage the impacts of growth actively and effectively. Coeur d'Alene's population growth over the past 10 years averages 1.8%/year (census.gov). Growth needs to be managed via a collaborative effort with the city council and planning commission as well as engagement in open communication with surrounding communities.</p>	<p>Rapid growth happens because the city governments (and county government) allow it to happen. There's nothing in the Constitution that says we are required to build an apartment or townhouse for every Californian that wants to move here. The Mayor is not a dictator nor a legislator. The Mayor does have several things they can do to push for responsible (very slow) growth. The Mayor can push city council to come up with new ordinances to protect the community. One example would be to turn neighborhoods into historical areas which would immunize them against zoning changes and density/development. The Mayor can push for a better North Idaho comprehensive plan which leaves much more of the area as it is. The Mayor can also be vocal in finding ways to get predatory outsiders to pay for the growth they are causing. A big part of the Mayor's job is in messaging and leadership and much of that opportunity seems wasted, at present.</p>
4. In your opinion what best serves the public, elected officials, or appointed officials?	<p>Elected officials are the best servant of the people, as they are subject to recall at the voting booth.</p>	<p>There is a place in effective government for both. Elected officials ensure accountability and appointed officials provide necessary expertise.</p>	<p>The tough answer that nobody wants is that it's all about the person. The best, motivated person will do the best job no matter if they are elected or appointed.</p>

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5. What role should the city council have in the design and authorization of new developments?	The city council, under current law, has the final say in authorizing new development, after its review, with the mayor voting as a tie breaker. As the elected representative of the people, those are the councils' and mayor's proper functions. However, over the last few years, the council has operated as a rubber stamp, approving nearly every proposal placed before them, often without debate, with lopsided votes. The review process is largely non-existent, with staff doing most of the work and the council acting as yes-men. This needs to stop, and the council and mayor need to remember that they serve the current residents of Coeur d'Alene, not people who may move here in the future.	By Idaho State Code, the city council defines the policies by which all developments are approved.	The city council should have a rigid, conservative growth plan in which the decisions are very easy. This whole repeating zoning change developer plan change culture that seems to fill city council meetings is unnecessary if the city had a strong plan and firm guidelines.
6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	One of the purposes of the forensic audit that I've proposed is to shed light on exactly this topic. We'll take a close look at items that fall in the category of what I call nice to have-- non-essential areas that can be better served, and more cost efficiently, by the private sector. The city already does this with sanitation, and I'm sure we'll find more areas where this can be implemented. My first thought is with the arts commission. While I favor public art, I am uncomfortable with using taxpayer money to fund the projects. I'd like to see a change to a public / private partnership, with funds raised in the business community, and management by the city and private enterprise.	Currently, Coeur d'Alene privatizes solid waste services and contracts for other services when appropriate (e.g. design and engineering).	I'm not currently aware of any but I'm open to suggestion.
7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities and why?	This is an issue that I'm not familiar with, that I'm going to have to research before I can provide a substantive answer. My inclination is to say that so long as there are no negative effects on the city, and that the rural communities pay a fair rate for the services-- not the same as residents, but higher, since they aren't paying city taxes-- I don't see why not. But again, I want to withhold a firm answer until I know more about the topic.	No, one key value of living in a city is access to city-managed sewer and water. To extend services outside the city is unfair to city resident taxpayers for whom the system was built.	Wouldn't this be up to the rural communities to initiate? I certainly had never viewed as the city's job to evangelize their water and sewer services to those outside...

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8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund but not raising taxes?	The city maintains a reserve fund of 15-20% of the general fund (\$46 Million) some \$7-9 million. That seems healthy, according to recommended standards, and would keep the city running for two months without any additional income. That said, I would like to see impact fees increased, and some of that money added to the reserve, increasing it to maintain the city for another (3rd) month.	Cities must manage their resources in the same manner as we do as private citizens. Frugal fund management and properly managed growth allow for a stable tax rate.	Taxes will be raised. Has there ever been a city that experienced 50% growth in two decades and didn't have higher taxes or density? I'm not aware of one. So, while I do want to slow down the growth to make it as organic as possible, there is going to be an increase in taxes. The question is whether the taxes will be proactive or not, and who will pay them. I want taxes raised now (yesterday) on predatory out-of-state real estate investors and multinational corporations who are doing business and reaping insane profits to the detriment of locals or local business. We need increased taxes on predatory outside investment to cool the insane market demand and we need taxes on multinational corporations to help our local businesses compete. One real problem with conservatism (why I am not a Republican or running as one) is that they view the government as a negative entity and the market as somehow morally right or correct. While I agree that the government is often (emphasis) negative, it is one of the few tools citizens have against an absolutely skewed, fraudulent, and predatory Fortune 500 and market-at-large (which has no semblance of a "free market").

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<p>9. What is your opinion of the increased push for affordable housing?</p>	<p>The push for "affordable housing" is a wedge issue designed to change the character of the city. The cost of housing in any area is dependent on market factors that are almost entirely out of control of city government, as they should be. What we are witnessing, with the rise in housing costs, is a reflection of the desirability of the community as built by its citizens, and a national spotlight brought on by a confluence of events, some political, many media driven. We've become a destination spot, with a bit of celebrity glamour driving the appeal. Some of this will wear off, in time.</p> <p>There are, of course, other factors in the rise in housing costs. The reality is that we are greatly restricted in how much we can build, with a lake and mountains confining our space, so the space available naturally comes at a premium. As for the term "affordable housing", we should come to an understanding as to what that means. Is it one bedroom apartments, two bedroom starter homes? Affordable for who? I'm most concerned about the phrase when it is used to suggest apartment units with subsidized rent, or other controls imposed by the government. We need just look elsewhere to see how well that works out.</p>	<p>With the recent and substantial increase in the cost of housing, a solution or several viable solutions must be found for all economic levels of our workforce.</p>	<p>The push for affordable housing is not going away. You can either be proactive about fixing it now or it will fix itself later in ways that nobody will like (see: Spokane). A big motivation to run for Mayor for me is affordable housing. Nobody seems to see the way in which the hot housing market (caused in large part by predatory outside investment) destroys local businesses (they can't get workers who can live here, they struggle, multinational competitors who are subsidized by the federal government wait them out, then replace local businesses as they fade away) and then destroys the town (multinational companies need workers so they take over politics and fix the housing problem in the simplest way possible, density and transient housing wherever it's easiest). The way to fix affordable housing now is with proactive measures to control the rental market and to cool demand in the overall real estate market so locals are not priced out by predatory out-of-staters. Ms. Miller is doing some great work trying to put together affordable housing solutions but I would rather drive most of the predatory investment money out of our city, allow a healthy market, and enable locals to be able to buy and rent normal single family housing at affordable rates. This would require some unpleasant solutions, such as rent control and primary resident tax exemptions, but I think it can be done, and is a way of dealing with allowing people to live and work here without adding transient housing or increasing density. I want to stress, the option here is not do things we don't like or do nothing. The option is to do things we dislike less now or end up with horrific solutions later, like Spokane. (The remainder of Mr. Lentz's answer can be found in his questionnaire)</p>

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10. How should the public's input be taken into consideration and implemented in the decision-making process?	Public engagement-- or lack of-- is a major issue in government. I believe in open forums, with maximum public input where ever possible. I have proposed that city council meetings be held at least once per quarter in a different venue, and on a weekend so that the public has more opportunity to observe what goes on. Elected representatives should listen to their constituents as often as possible. However, as we are a republic, and not a democracy, the elected representative should use his best judgment in casting his vote. The public may decide whether the vote was right or not at the next election.	We need to listen to first hear and understand--and then to be understood.	Citizens already have many avenues for being involved in the process. Attending meetings and giving comments are a few options that are already available. Electing officials (representatives) who will do as they see fit (representing the voters) is another step in the decision-making process for which citizens ultimately have the responsibility. If you want a hand in the future of the city, vote for candidates who have similar visions to yours.
11. Should the concept of "equitable outcome" be implemented as a part of the city council's decision-making process? Why or why not?	No. Equitable outcome is Marxism.	I believe the government should accord equal value to everyone; this includes city councils.	No. An equitable outcome can never be realized.
12. What role should the health board play in the city council's decision-making process?	None. They have no constitutional, let alone moral authority in the city council's decision-making process. Beyond COVID, what other resolutions would they have a say in? Do we allow them to make the argument that air quality is compromised by diesel trucks, which is a health issue, and therefore all city trucks must be electric? Where would their "authority" stop?	When making any decision for our community, input from a variety of sources should be considered.	Barring an actual health catastrophe, something like the bubonic plague, none.
13. Is there anything in your personal or business life that would be a conflict of interest in your ability to serve the people of this city?	None.	No	No.

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14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	<p>My background is largely one of marketing and sales. I opened the first retail computer store in New York City in 1980, selling Apple IIs to the New York Times, Newsweek, and others. After selling the business, I worked for a large advertising agency as a type director on major accounts such as Mercedes-Benz and JC Penney. Moving to California, I started a boutique ad agency serving the Apple computer peripheral market. When Apple's market share dropped dramatically, the business closed and I went into auto sales. Later, taking classes in web design, I became an instructor, and then a corporate trainer serving companies such as EDS and GM.</p> <p>After my wife and I became empty nesters, we moved to Coeur d'Alene to be closer to her family, who have been here since Idaho was a territory. I worked as a business developer for a local company, and became involved with the chamber of commerce, and the CDA Economic Development Committee. On retiring, I began to attend city council meetings as an observer, and then attended local political club meetings. I have no prior political experience, but have always watched and studied politics and public policy. My broad range of experience and interest in many areas, my study skills and ability to quickly absorb information, and my decision making skills give me the foundation to be successful.</p> <p>Moreover, I am passionate in my desire to prevent this city from a slide into the abyss. I am a two-time political refugee, from New York and California, and I have seen this scenario played out before. I will do everything in my power to not let it happen here.</p>	<p>Experience matters. I've been a resident of Idaho and Kootenai County since 1973. I was raised in Missoula, Montana, and attended Carroll College (Helena, Montana) where I obtained my Bachelor of Arts degree. I also earned a Master of Education Administration at Whitworth College (Spokane, Washington) and then furthered my public administration studies through the University of Idaho. I worked in education administration as an elementary principal in Washington and Idaho. Since 1976, I served the residents of Kootenai County as Mayor of Post Falls, Idaho, President of City Council, Commissioner for Planning Zoning in Post Falls, Idaho State Senator, and, most recently, as Coeur d'Alene City Administrator. I dedicated my life to developing a collaborative government, ensuring community safety, and building unified cities via my roles in government and my positions on numerous state and local boards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coeur d'Alene City Administrator • Idaho State Senator • Vice President of the Idaho State Board of Education • University of Idaho Board of Regents • Association of Idaho Cities • United Way of Kootenai County • University of Idaho CDA Advisory Board • Post Falls Mayor • Post Falls City Administrator • Post Falls Education Foundation • Chairman of the Idaho Charter School Commission • Secretary of the Panhandle Area Council • Post Falls Chamber of Commerce • Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce • President of the Spokane River Property Owners Association • Food Bank Board of Directors • Kootenai County Jobs Plus 	<p>I grew up as an Air Force Brat, so I've traveled the country. I've lived in several of the hottest cities in the country for most of my adult life (San Diego, Nashville, and Seattle). I've seen growth and corporate sanitization of culture from the point of bigger, "better" places. It makes me recognize what is special here. It's why I moved here and want to live here for the rest of my life. I have worked a variety of jobs, from art to sales to retail to construction to hospitality. I understand the average worker. I am an average man. I can relate to most everyone. With a varied background working with many people, for many people, doing many things, in many places, it gives me an ability to learn quickly, work very well with others, and make tough decisions; all ideal for a Mayor.</p>