

Watchmen Voter Guide for Post Falls: Mayor

* [Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire](#) *

→ [Bobby Wilhelm and Daniel Temple have withdrawn from the race](#) ←

| | <u>Austin Hildebrand</u> | <u>Ronald G. Jacobson</u> |
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| 1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position? | My name is R. Austin Hildebrand. I am running for the Mayor of Post Falls and I have decided to run for this position because the people of Post Falls deserve a strong leader. There voices deserve to be represented at all times. | My name is Ron Jacobson and I am running for reelection as the Mayor of Post Falls. I have held this position for the past 8 years. Prior to that, I was a Post Falls City councilman for approximately 15 years. I have also served on the City's Park and Recreation Commission and Urban Renewal Agency. I have the experience, business acumen, passion and dedication for this position. I feel the citizens of Post Falls deserve good, qualified leadership, and I can provide these qualifications. |
| 2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas. | <p>a. Protect the rights/liberties of every individual. Every avenue to protect/defend the rights and liberties of the people should be examined and implemented (pass ordinances that restrict the ability of others to tread on the rights of the people, restrict government involvement, etc.).</p> <p>b. Responsible stewardship. The city of Post Falls should be actively looking into every possible avenue to ensure that our area is preserved responsibly. We should also be ensuring that our beloved area is sustainable for generations to come.</p> <p>c. Fiscal Responsibility. The entirety of the city's budget should be examined in depth and every possible reduction/elimination of taxes/fees/etc. should be implemented.</p> | <p>First: Post Falls can be improved by continuing to work with our state legislators to lessen the tax burden on our residents. The city has provided input and recommendations on how to accomplish this, but the legislature has not taken effective action. The main reason for tax increases is a tax shift from commercial properties to residential properties due to the fact that commercial assessed values are increasing at a lesser rate than residential properties. This can be addressed through adjustments to home owner exemption limits, adjustments to the circuit breaker and review of the assessment methods. It is difficult, if not impossible for the city to limit house values. Second: We can also improve our city by ensuring there are a variety of housing options available for the residents. Housing prices are an issue and the availability of housing options can help to alleviate this issue. Third: We need to continue to work on economic development, to include creating or attracting good paying jobs and building an available workforce to fill these jobs.</p> |
| 3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho? How should the mayor manage growth? | <p>I'm a local who has lived here for almost 22 years. I believe that responsible stewardship of our beloved area should be one of the utmost priorities for elected positions. After speaking with many individuals on the subject of growth, I believe ONE of the ways that we could responsibly mitigate growth, would be to implement a permit cap program. Once the permit cap is reached, then permits can be submitted and reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This does two very important things for our area in my opinion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It provides a direct avenue to start managing the rapid growth (seems like no one wants to begin this). 2. It does not alienate anyone from having their permits examined (for example; a local wants to build their retirement home on a piece of property that they have owned in the city for decades. (The remainder of Mr. Hildebrand's Answer can be seen in his questionnaire) | <p>The rapid growth is a concern. It needs to be known that many of the houses being built today are in projects that were approved 10-15 years ago. The city planned for the future by approving annexations in the past. If a property is annexed and zoned, it is difficult, if not impossible to not issue building permits if they conform to the zoning and if infrastructure is available. In addition, at the City of Post Falls, we do not "recruit" people to move here, nor are we the proponent on large annexations and housing developments. We did act as the proponent on an annexation on the west side of town, but the purpose for this was to assist three good companies with their move to North Idaho. I would like to see the growth slow to a more sustainable level, but North Idaho has been discovered and people will continue to want to live here. Mayors are not the one who manages growth. City Councils make decisions on annexations and zoning with the mayor voting only to break a tie. (The remainder of Mr. Jacobson's answer can be seen in his questionnaire)</p> |

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| 4. In your opinion what best serves the public, elected officials, or appointed officials? | My opinion on the above question is very clear. In regards to government, only elected officials should be making decisions that affect the public. FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE. | In the case of municipalities, I think elected councils and mayors is the best option. The mayor brings names forward for council confirmation for the positions of City Administrator, Chief of Police, etc. This works well for the city. |
| 5. What role should the city council have in the design and authorization of new developments? | Life I have stated previously, our area is in need of some serious responsible stewardship. As it stands now, there are positions within the city of Post Falls who are allowed to make decisions on growth (developments, subdivisions, etc.) that do not need to get council/mayor approval. I believe that only elected positions should have the ability to make decisions on growth. Furthermore, I strongly believe that only after the city has exhausted public forum, public opinion, etc. on the matter; then and only then should a decision be made. The voice of the people should be represented at ALL times. | I don't believe the city council's role is the design of subdivisions and new developments. We have staff who are professionals in this area. We rely on them for their review of any such requests. The council's role is to hear requests for annexations, zoning and appeals of Planning and Zoning Commission findings. The council then makes their decisions based on the facts and whether or not these requests conform to the master plan and other established criteria. The actual design of new developments is best left to the professionals who deal in this arena. |
| 6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized? | ABSOLUTLEY. Fiscal responsibility needs to once again be brought into the forefront of our governments (Federal, State, County, and Local). There is ALWAYS a way to improve something and I will make it a priority to cut/eliminate as many taxes/fees as possible. This includes examining the service provided, the budget behind said services, and looking at every alternative option (this includes the private sector). | No |
| 7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities and why? | No, I do not believe that proper access to water/sewer in rural communities needs to be increased. If the city approves annexations of rural communities, then they should be treated the same as every other taxpayer in the city. There should never be a higher or lower fee for specific groups/individuals (especially if you become or are already a part of the city limits). | While I would like to see all development on sewer as opposed to septic tanks, I don't believe it is the city's responsibility to provide sewer or water to unincorporated areas. This is a service we provide to city residents. I think it is problematic to provide these services to properties over which we have no control in regards to development standards. |

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| 8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund but not raising taxes? | Over my dead body will there ever be a tax increase. There is always another way to raise funds. As for keeping a healthy reserve fund, this directly correlates with the fiscal responsibility that needs to take place. If elected mayor of Post Falls, I will make it a point to trim all the fat in the budget and strengthen reserve funds from within (i.e., cut and redirect wasteful spending, etc.). | The City of Post Falls maintains a reserve amount to cover six months operating expenses. We do not keep excessive reserve balances. I believe this is very prudent financial planning to ensure we can continue to operate should an issue arise with property tax collections and allocations. We have been able to put ourselves in this position without raising our levy rate for 12 out of the past 13 years. The one year we did increase taxes was to replace street light fees that previously were billed on the utility bill. New growth and the tax revenue it has generated is one of the main reasons we have not raised taxes. Understand, taxes continue to increase due to property value appreciation and a shift in the taxable value from commercial property to residential property. Also, the city is only one of many taxing entities that comprise a taxpayer's bill. |
| 9. What is your opinion of the increased push for affordable housing? | There is, without a doubt, a lop-sided scale in regards to affordable housing and the local population (just as there is a lop-sided scale on the commercial vs. residential tax burden that plaques our area). In my opinion, this needs to be addressed and I believe that responsible stewardship methods will drastically start to level out the scales. It honestly blows my mind that the issue of being able to afford a roof over your head is even prevalent in today's society. | I think we need affordable housing but I haven't seen much progress made in this area. I know there are groups studying the issue but I am not confident that they will bring forth a solution. I hope I am wrong. An example is when a developer brings a plan forward to build housing to meet the needs of the "Missing Middle Market". While this is a god idea, there are many real estate investors, many from out of state, who can buy all the units to be built and then turn them into rental units which may of may not be affordable. As mentioned in question #2, we need to work towards having a variety of different housing options available for residents. |
| 10. How should the public's input be taken into consideration and implemented in the decision-making process? | This goes directly back to the "For the people, by the people". As far as I'm concerned, you have no right to any elected or governing position if you do not seriously take into consideration the input of the public. These are you constituents and you work for them (not the other way around). The public's opinion should be measured and action taken that is proportionally appropriate. | Public input is important and always appreciated. It is important to note that in public hearings concerning annexations, zoning and subdivisions, we must consider how the projects or requests conform to our 6 established approval criteria. We often hear comments made during public hearing stating the impact on infrastructure has not been considered. This is inaccurate. All submissions are reviewed by staff to ensure they conform to the various master plans and that if these submissions are approved, infrastructure capacity is available to meet the increased needs or impact. While it may appear that the council does not hear what is said during public comment, what is said is heard loud and clear. Again, there are approval criteria that guides decisions made. |

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| 11. Should the concept of “equitable outcome” be implemented as a part of the city council’s decision-making process? Why or why not? | Elected officials, governing bodies, and so on should always strive to be fair and just. As for if “equitable outcome” should be implemented in the council decision making process; I don’t think so. I think that people need to learn to be people again and communicate. Through information, discourse, proper communication, and respect; city council should be able to make the proper decisions. | No. I had not heard the term “equitable outcome” until I read this survey. I then googled the term and found that one reference was to schools, which would then fall under the school district and their trustees. Another definition or example was “ a controversial political concept which describes a state in which people have approximately the same material wealth or, more generally, in which the general conditions of their lives are similar.” The city’s responsibility is to provide services to all residents. Not all residents have the same financial position, and it is not the city’s responsibility to see that they do. |
| 12. What role should the health board play in the city council’s decision-making process? | ZERO. Until the Panhandle health board is a board of elected officials, they should have no say or power over others. As I have said before, the voice of the people should be represented at all times and I will make sure of that. | This is a politically charged question that in my opinion comes from COVID and the actions taken by various entities. The city considers information provided by experts in various fields and the Health Board (Panhandle Health District) is one of those experts. PHD does not control the city council. |
| 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? | Negative. I have full faith in my ability to serve the people of Post Falls without conflict or negative outcome. | No. I have been serving the people of Post Falls for close to 30 years and there has never been an issue on either the personal or business side. If I have a conflict of interest on any issue that comes before us, I recuse myself. I will also recuse myself if I believe there could be a perceived conflict of interest. There were recent claims on a land use matter accusing me of participating in a public hearing in which I had a financial interest. First, this matter had NOT come to city council at that time and I had previously informed our city attorney that if it did come to city council, I would recuse myself even though I had no legal conflict of interest. I did recuse myself earlier this month. The claims were FALSE and uninformed. |

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| <p>14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?</p> | <p>You could be a politician whose served in city government since 1999 and if you are out of touch with the people, then it doesn't matter what "qualifications" you might have.</p> <p>I can't tell you any specific "qualifications", but I can tell you the truth. The truth of the matter is that things are going to get worse before they get better. We have already seen what "qualified" elected positions seem to think is appropriate treatment for their constituents. The truth about me is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'm a local business owner who happens to dearly love the area in which I have been blessed to grow up/live in. 2. I'm married to my best friend who is an amazing woman (also a local and local business owner). 3. I've slowly seen this area be torn apart and mismanaged by elected officials and non-elected officials for decades (in a multitude of ways). 4. I've seen elected officials not protect their constituents (most didn't even attempt to defend or respect their constituents when faced with adversity). 5. I strongly believe Post Falls needs a leader who won't be strong armed, threatened, forced, or coerced. 6. I am a Type A individual who is intelligent, strong, kind, patient, and one who has empathy (among other positive traits). I, unlike others, will put my all into representing, defending, and being there for the people. | <p>I am a 3rd generation North Idahoan, born and raised in Coeur d'Alene. My wife and I have lived in Post Falls for the past 41 years with the exception of a two year period during which we lived in Washington. I have been a banker for 43 years and also earned my CPA. I have served in many different capacities for many different non-profit groups, schools and my church. I have 30 years' experience in operations of municipal government and I am completely qualified to hold the position of mayor. As mayor, I recognize that any success I might have is due to the staff that I have the pleasure to work with.</p> |