

Watchmen Voter Guide for City of Rathdrum: City Council - Seat 3
** Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire **

	<u>Michael Fox</u>	<u>Kurt Schwab</u>	<u>John Hodgkins</u>
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	My name is Michael Fox and I am a candidate for the Rathdrum City Council Seat #3. I am running because over the past few years I've watched the Rathdrum City Government focus entirely on growth by encouraging large annexations, residential subdivisions, and high density projects with little to no regard for the impact this growth has on existing residents.	My name is Kurt Schwab and I am running for Rathdrum City Council Seat 3. I am running because I love to serve the people of Rathdrum.	Declined to Respond
2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.	Recognize and resolve major traffic issues. Two state highways and several major arterials funnel traffic into Rathdrum and intersect in a school zone with estimates of a 64% traffic increase over the next few years. A. Rejuvenate core downtown business area and encourage shops, restaurant and office development. The people of Rathdrum want to retain that small town atmosphere and avoid urban sprawl. B. Provide safety, convenience and connectivity to encourage more walking and biking activities for all ages.	Our city can be improved by acknowledging the good of the past and finding solutions to the current issues. Ideas that I have for improving the city are to clarify the law in regards to the powers held by planning and zoning, address traffic issues, and encourage every person in Rathdrum to go over to your neighbor's house and get to know them.	Declined to Respond

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3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho? How should the city council manage growth?	<p>Rathdrum is currently experiencing significant problems with traffic congestion, overcrowded schools, limited sewer capacity, and diminished public health and safety services such as fire and emergency medical response times. Most existing residents correctly believe these problems are a direct result of uncontrolled residential growth being promoted by the city, and that a larger measure of the cost to mitigate these problems should be assessed to developers who are profiting from the growth. If elected, my priorities will be:</p> <p>A. Seek to enact a city ordinance to limit the number of building permits during a 12 month construction period as a means of slowing down and controlling the growth to allow infrastructure and services to keep pace with the needs.</p> <p>B. Amend the existing subdivision permitting ordinance to include a cost sharing formula to minimize the cost of growth on existing residents, including schools.</p> <p>C. Avoid annexations to help preserve the Rathdrum prairie and maintain that “small town” atmosphere that most everyone wants for the community.</p> <p>D. Avoid rezoning parcels that encourage high density development.</p>	<p>I am grateful for the rapid growth of North Idaho. Rapid growth is a good problem to have; a much better problem than slow decay. The city council should manage growth by keeping in line with Adam Smith's idea of "good government" and continue to support the concepts of capitalism by allowing the market to solve.</p>	Declined to Respond
4. In your opinion what best serves the public, elected officials, or appointed officials?	<p>I think it requires both to effectively provide government services. Administrative and management functions may best be served by appointed officials who should have the education and experience to be proficient in their position. Those with overall responsibility for policy and direction must be elected and remain directly accountable to the people. In general, and in theory, elected officials best serve the public.</p>	<p>I believe elected officials best serve the public. The boss of an elected official is the people, the elected people are where power should reside.</p>	Declined to Respond

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5. What role should the city council have in the design and authorization of new developments?	Final approval of both and decisions should be based upon and reflect the best interests of existing citizens and not just the wishes of developers.	The role of the city council in design and authorization of new developments should be according to law. For example, the city council should make sure the city code reflects the desired requirements for builders. This limits the backdoor politics, and gives all builders the opportunity to submit plans according to the standards set forth in the city code.	Declined to Respond
6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	None that I can think of at this time, however, more in depth knowledge and analysis of current services may result in such efforts in the future.	Rathdrum city does not offer any services that I think should be cut, eliminated, or privatized.	Declined to Respond
7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities and why?	Not if it means expansion and residential growth in the rural communities. North Idaho and especially Kootenai County is unique in that it has a more than adequate water supply, however it is an underground aquifer that is sensitive to development. Runoff from fertilizer, pesticide, road oils, etc. from the thousands of new homes and cars planned for this area puts the water at risk. The sewer systems in the county provide for disposal either by spreading over the water supply aquifer or by treatment and dumping into the Spokane River. Both of these means have limited capacity that must not be exceeded.	I think that depends on the desires of the rural communities. When the city expands its services it does so on the basis of annexation into the city limits. When you are within the city limits, you are subject to the city code. Many rural individuals live outside the city in order to avoid the city code and restrictions.	Declined to Respond
8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund but not raising taxes?	The current rapid growth makes it fairly easy for cities to build up reserve funds and not raise taxes. Unfortunately, this same rapid growth causes collateral costs to taxpayers due to the increased needs for school facilities, fire and medical emergency services, roads, and other infrastructure. Certainly, cities should maintain some reserves for emergency or unanticipated needs, but the use should be restricted.	If the reserve fund is already present, then there is not much to do. However, if a city does not have an emergency fund, then good government needs to engage in good planning so it can set aside a little at a time to save up against a rainy day.	Declined to Respond

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9. What is your opinion of the increased push for affordable housing?	Most current programs are seemingly designed to provide more benefits for the developers rather than those seeking an affordable place to call home and high-density projects can create more problems than they solve. We have to find solutions to this dilemma but it will take more creative and “outside the box” thinking than subsidized housing. I believe that competitive programs with incentives to develop affordable homes that include the “pride of ownership” factor and sweat equity should be explored.	I would need more information on what is meant by affordable housing. My view of affordable housing is tied to economics and allowing the market to solve.	Declined to Respond
10. How should the public’s input be taken into consideration and implemented in the decision-making process?	In April of this year, Rathdrum City officials blocked an effort by the citizens to place a measure on the November ballot via the citizen initiative process. Idaho is one of only 26 states that provides for initiatives and referendums by the citizens. If elected, a priority will be to assure this will never happen again and no city official will hinder or impede the lawful efforts of the citizens to legislate. A second priority will be to develop a more “user friendly” approach to public hearings and comment opportunities. Right now, most residents do not feel their voice is heard, respected or considered as part of any decision making by the council or the planning and zoning commission.	The public's comments should always be taken into consideration and weighed. However, part of the duty of an elected official is to make decisions and then take responsibility for decisions made.	Declined to Respond
11. 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?	No, I would have no conflicts of interest.	There are no conflicts in my personal or business life in serving the people of Rathdrum.	Declined to Respond

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12. Should the concept of “equitable outcome” be implemented as a part of the city council’s decision-making process? Why or why not?	I’m not certain that I fully understand this term or the question as framed. City taxes that can be affected by almost every city council decision might be a good example of “equitable outcome” in that the amount of tax paid varies according to a residents’ property value. The more you own the more you pay and the less your property value the less you pay. Seems fair until rapid growth and development occurs and shifts additional tax burdens for other agencies and services to the existing residents and the developer does not pay a fair share of these downstream costs. In this sense, yes, an equitable outcome should be implemented.	Where "equitable outcome" is in quotation marks I am unclear as to what this question is asking. If the question is asking do I believe the decision making process should be based on equal outcome rather than equal opportunity, my answer would be that the decisions of the city council should be based in law and seek to provide equal opportunity.	Declined to Respond
13. What role should the health board play in the city council’s decision-making process?	Advisory only as well as any decisions by the city council.	In regards to public health decisions, City Council should seek as much information as possible in making public health decisions. However, the decision of how to respond to a public health issue should remain squarely in the hands of the city council and not unelected officials. With that response, City Council should be prepared to take responsibility for the decision made.	Declined to Respond
14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	I retired after a 34 year career with REA electric cooperatives which are non-profit and member owned. These cooperatives exist for one single purpose and that is to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost to the cooperative member/owners. City governments should do the same with an emphasis on the best interest of EXISTING residents. As a utility manager, my responsibilities and experience included multi-million dollar budgets, long term and strategic planning, union negotiations, and direct customer service. Although it never crossed my mind at the time, I believe the many years of utility management experience provided the ideal preparation for the decision making role of a city council member.	I am uniquely situated to serve Rathdrum due to my profession as a lawyer. Legal training has given me great insight into why the rule of law is so crucial in our county. In addition to my training as a lawyer, I am a husband, father, son, brother, and servant. All of those roles provide perspective and a deep belief in serving and loving my neighbor, which is the reason I choose to run for city council.	Declined to Respond