

Watchmen Voter Guide for Coeur d’Alene City Council Seat #3
*** Click on each candidate’s name to see their completed questionnaire ***

	<u>Clark Albritton</u>	<u>Dan Gookin</u>
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	Clark Albritton for CDA city council seat 3. Running because for the 24 years my wife and I have lived here, CDA has been a conservative Christian community – but our City Council and Mayor have increasingly become unresponsive to those values and the voters/taxpayers – rolling over instead under pressure from outside influences, developers, NGOs, National political movements, etc. that all have agendas the large majority of us oppose.	Dan Gookin Coeur d’Alene City Council, Seat 3 To ensure that we maintain the character and charm of Coeur d’Alene, to represent the citizens and defend their rights, and to be a fiscal hawk and watch the city’s budget.
2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.	By: Slowing/halting development of high density housing and the untenable demands being placed on existing streets/roads/hwys – infrastructure (water/sewer) and provide time for infrastructure to catch up. By: Stopping special support, subsidies and outsized influence of various woke global political operatives like the Human Rights council – and keeping the city out of the business of providing free/low rent facility and promotion of these organizations. These organizations are here to promote an agenda that runs counter to the vast majority of our citizens – and do not deserve subsidies.	The best thing we could do is stop using urban renewal to plant high-end homes for out-of-state wealthy part-time owners. Instead, we can use this tool as it’s been used throughout Idaho: To bring in career-level jobs. Urban renewal can do it. I’ve mentioned it at various meetings. The rest of Council disagrees, which is sad for the people who could use those jobs. It would be nice to provide more opportunities for the public to interact with government. We hold only one hearing on the budget where the public can speak – far too late in the process to have any significant impact. This example is just one, there are many instances where public involvement can be improved. For example, we need more turnover on our committees. And we need to have the committees not choose their own members. This town has many people with different opinions and ideas. Their voices must be heard. This issue may seem minor, but we need a receptionist at city hall. We need a human being to answer the phones, help people with minor things, and to direct phone calls. To best serve the people, we should get rid of the annoying voicemail system.
3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho?	The growth of CDA is unnatural – not purely driven by market forces, but an actual agenda aka CDA2030, and others, with a literal GOAL of increasing the population by a certain factor. The fact is, our pristine natural environment has limits and we have a duty to our progeny to protect this environment – not over build it. We cannot prevent natural growth and the market forces that will slow that growth – but we certainly shouldn’t have a “goal” of increasing the density of population unsustainable in CDA to appease a World Economic Forum “quota.”	It must mean we’re doing something right! But what we can do better is accommodate the growth. The key is to provide higher density not only in places where adequate infrastructure exists, but to supplement the density with plenty of green space. This approach has been used elsewhere with great success. What the city is doing now with infill and projects in Riverstone with dead-end streets is not only bad planning but ugly. You can’t plant a tree when your house is only five feet away from your neighbor. Eventually accelerated growth negatively impacts quality of life. The lines are long at the grocery store. It takes weeks to see a doctor. Traffic is a mess. These issues must also be addressed as people continue to move here. Long-term, the people who work downtown in the service industries won’t be able to afford to live here. Parking and mass transit will become necessary if the town is able to survive given the current rate of growth.

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4. In your opinion what best serves the public, elected officials, or appointed officials?	One of the most insidious tyrannies we have seen in the federal and state governments is the power and control given to unelected “appointees” who have terms and longevity in positions to truly control policy and inflict maximum ideological damage on society. They have no accountability to the people and often laugh in the face of complaining citizens. They are used by the elected bodies as shield for tyrannical rules and laws, wherein the elected representatives get to say, “gee, I’d like to help you, but well, the BLM is in control of that – or the EPA is in control of that – they make those decisions, we just watch you suffer from them.”	The difference between the two is accountability. Appointed officials tend to be less reactive to the public, whereas elected officials may be overreactive to the public. In some capacities, you need experts who must be appointed. But I feel that any time public money is spent or when people’s rights are involved, an elected board is the best choice. It’s not perfect, but I can’t think of anything better.
5. What improvements should be made to the city councils’ role in the design and authorization of new developments?	As previously stated – the city planning process and the required planning SHOULD NOT include some “goal” for growth – that paradigm itself is a flawed premise – but instead, should be directed at limiting and stopping the spread or annexation of territory under city control, such as Coeur Terre – and a priority must be given to preserving land and open space in its current state versus development of dense housing. The plan should be supportive of authorizing development for traditional single-family dwellings with property and space form factors that are in harmony with the existing state.	Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) should be automatically appealed to Council. Right now, by Idaho Code, they’re not. The PUD is where most of the high-density development and infill occurs. Yet these developments are not automatically appealed to Council. This missing step means that the appointed Planning Commission has the final say. Even when a PUD is presented to council, unless it’s an appeal, the completed PUD is never shown. And, yes, I have complained about this disfunction many times. The most recent was during the Coeur Terre annexation. The City Council cannot adequately supervise the design and authorization of new developments until the PUD process is changed.
6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	As a general rule, I think it is a bad idea for municipalities to establish permanent fixed cost personnel and infrastructure to provide services that are normally and naturally available in a competitive private market. This of course has to be balanced with the need for the city to have control over critical infrastructure like water/sewer. But there are discretionary spending areas where we can examine the benefit to citizens of moving toward privatization. It has often been my position that public libraries in the modern age could be better supported by private philanthropy, for example, and especially “art” commissions – wherein a very few are allowed to inflict “art” on the entire city that only a handful of us would even care to “enjoy.”	During my tenure, the city has eliminated some commissions and boards that served a redundant purpose. Our parking enforcement was privatized two years ago. The problem with some aspects of privatization is accountability. If the outside agency does a poor job, it reflects badly on the city and the city isn’t in a good position to deal with it. The last time a city service was cut happened in the mid-1990s when the mayor decided to do away with the leaf pickup service. He lost the next election, and the leaf-pickup was restored. The city could eliminate its prosecutor’s office, as it’s also a county function. The risk (again) is accountability. Another agency would handle prosecutions which limits Council’s input and oversight.

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7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities and why?	As part of my research while running for office, I met with the CDA director of Water, Terry Pickel and his replacement (Terry just retired), Mr. Marine, and discussed this topic in some depth. The CDA current pumping capability is at capacity for peak demand, and we are at a crossroads regarding steps to add future capacity. Obviously, conservation and best practices to reduce waste are urgently needed, but the fact is, CDA Water may not have the resources to extend or increase service to rural communities at this time. The aquifer itself is not an unlimited resource and new studies are in process to actually assess the status and capacity of the Rathdrum Aquifer. Managing water and sewer in rural areas continues to be a limiting factor for those who build or live in those areas – but that in itself prevents over development and sprawl. For now, I would say – I am open to hearing arguments from affected parties – pros and cons.	It will need to be as the aquifer is at risk and those wells outside the city run dry. A policy is in place to accommodate those situations, though the citizen must annex into the city to receive city services. During my tenure on Council, the city has provided water service to outside residents a few times. Once service was extended beyond city limits to help a citizen whose well ran dry. They must commit to annexation as soon as an adjacent property is annexed. Sewer is a touchier issue in that our Wastewater Treatment plant’s capacity is limited. Eventually we will be near that limit – and we’re even closer after the Coeur Terre annexation. When we hit the limit, about 80,000 people, the city is pretty much done growing.
8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increase taxes?	A healthy reserve fund is a critical feature of a strong budget plan. Coeur d’Alene’s city budget has gone from 70 million a year to the current budget of 132 million – with only an 11% increase in population. There is a high percentage, I’ve heard 70% of the spending that is mandatory fixed spending on personnel, fire and police, city services, etc. Studying whatever remains in fine details and searching for opportunities to reduce spending has to be a deliberate goal and focus. The public should be allowed to “peak behind the curtain” and attend and comment on hearings before the actual “finished product” is presented for comment and about to be finalized. The city should continue to find ways to reduce spending while at the same time, negotiating with our “conservative” state legislature for a large share of the taxes and use fees that overwhelmingly go to the state – such as gas taxes, etc. We should see a larger portion of this revenue remaining to support our local expenses.	The question is whether it’s the Council’s job to tax people for a reserve fund (savings account) or to use taxes to pay for services. When a reserve account (called “fund balance”) exists, it means more revenue was received than spent. This condition happens every year in the city, typically to the tune of one million dollars. It doesn’t mean we’ve over-raised property taxes. Typically, the revenue comes in the form of grants, state funds, and other sources. Even so, various departments end up not spending all their budgeted funds, which builds the fund balance reserve. During my time on Council, I’ve heard different figures for what the fund balance percentage should be. Ideally, it should fund the government until the next property tax check comes in (twice a year). Council has been told that the money needs to be a given amount to account for an “emergency” or some disaster. Yet we just had COVID and the city’s revenue did not fall. In fact, thanks to the US government printing trillions of dollars of (inflationary) cash, the city came out well ahead during COVID. So, I’m at a loss to see what kind of emergency would justify a huge fund balance. As long as the departments don’t go on a spending spree every September – and they don’t, I check – the city should maintain a good fund balance. The issue is whether Council spends this “rainy day reserve fund” on frivolous projects, as they have in the past before I was elected.

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<p>9. What is your opinion of the increased push for affordable housing?</p>	<p>We have seen the devastating effects of cities across American centrally planning housing, subsidies – intervening in natural markets in ways that have led to shocking consequences. As a general over-arching principle, city government should avoid the fallacy that government can resolve all problems – that the market is broken and “we can fix it.” The city can encourage and protect existing “affordable housing” such as manufactured homes, mobile homes, starter homes for many folks, without going down the path of high-density government funded/mandated and managed programs of “affordable housing” projects.</p>	<p>“Affordable housing” a political talking point with no gas in the tank. Politicians mention it because it’s important but there’s little government can do. The only way to make housing affordable is to bring in the jobs that pay the income that makes housing affordable.</p> <p>Three types of housing exist in this country: High-end luxury homes, government subsidized housing, and everything else. There is no “affordable housing” category. Housing is affordable if you can afford it.</p> <p>Yet while some politicians crow about affordable housing, this City of Coeur d’Alene’s urban renewal agency is building high-end homes for out-of-state wealthy residents. It’s disingenuous to talk about affordable housing while such high-end homes are being built.</p> <p>And the ironic thing is that we could use urban renewal here to bring in the high-paying jobs and careers that would make our housing more affordable. This is a decision I bring up often on Council, often to deaf ears.</p>
<p>10. All too often local residents feel that their public comment is not taken into consideration when decisions are made that directly affect their daily lives and their property value. What would you suggest so that the public’s best interests become a priority over builders and developers?</p>		<p>It’s a judgement call as to whether elected officials are truly listening to citizens or whether their minds are made up before the meeting. I keep an open mind. Further, I always pay dear attention to the public. It takes effort to attend a public meeting, to sit and wait, then to offer testimony in the brief time allotted. That information must weigh heavily as others in the room have more sway.</p> <p>The problem here is that citizens are unaware of the rules and often not informed of the decision process. For example, with a zone change the language must be specific. Emotional arguments don’t register, but using the code and key words found in the comp plan and in the findings is important. Case in point was a zone change (density increase) on 7th Street, which Council denied. The presentation and testimony offered was spot-on. It addressed issues in the comprehensive plan and in the findings. The key opponent (a doctor) listed reasons relevant to the code. It was a clear, logical argument with no emotional pleas or typical “I don’t like it” type of commentary. Council agreed and the density increase was denied. That’s the way it must be done.</p> <p>Unfortunately, in my position, I cannot coach people who are offering testimony. If I could, it would be the type of training citizens need in order to communicate best and work the system to achieve their desired results.</p>

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11. What is your opinion of “Smart Cities” and how they apply to North Idaho?	Smart Cities is an illustration of global central planners disseminating a stealth surveillance plan disguised as something to benefit the traffic their other dense concentration of populations has caused. It has all the appearances of apparatus to facilitate a police state and I am adamantly opposed to implementing – regardless of the economic coercions involved.	SMART cities are bad news for our country. I don’t think such a system can be successfully implemented without a central bank digital currency. Even so, I oppose any efforts toward that end. I opposed and was one of the few who originally voted against the Transportation Management Center on the KMPO. What citizens need to look out for are the nefarious incremental steps leading up to the implementation of SMART cities/15-minute cities. For example, decreased parking – which is an issue here. They decrease the parking requirements because “people will use public transportation.” This action limits freedom of mobility. Mixed-use development is also a key. And I keep an eye out for the phrase “walkability.” The City’s comprehensive plan hints at some of these types of neighborhoods, which is one step toward the SMART city concept – and another reason why I voted against the comprehensive plan. Council must be ever vigilant to avoid government overreach and control. Keep in mind that the US government adopted the Chinese Communist model during the pandemic. This overreach of government authority set an ugly precedent.
12. 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 outcomes and managing to them is very subjective and interventionist – using the presupposition that there are “scores to be settled.” That is a bad paradigm for a city government responsible for treating all of its citizens with blind equality – without favoring or disfavoring groups of any kind. There must be equal opportunities – outcomes are determined by individual and market factors.	No. To me, “equitable outcome” implies using government force to achieve a desired political result. People must be free to make their own choices and face the consequences of their own actions. And who knows which political result is best? Sometimes the worst evil in this world is done under the best of intentions. Government can provide a level playing field: no insiders, no favorites, no putting the thumb on the scale for the cronies. Then the people are free to use their own talents and skills and achieve the outcome they earn, not what society or the majority deems is “equitable.” All men are created equal. After creation what happens next is up to you.
13. Is there anything in your personal, business, or career life that would be a conflict of interest in your ability to serve the people of this city?	NO	No. I have not joined any boards and groups specifically to avoid a conflict of interest. I do donate to many charities and organizations in town, but I avoid being on those boards or participating in any other activity that could be deemed a conflict of interest.

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<p>14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?</p>	<p>My wife and I are 24 year residents of Coeur d'Alene, parents of two children raised in the community who attended the public schools here for a period – but inadequacies there caused us to move them to our church private schools. So I am deeply invested in the success of Coeur d'Alene and in resisting the global forces of central management that are trying to assert their dominance here (and everywhere). I have a BSBA from the University of Phoenix in San Jose, CA and have worked for the same company for 20 years, in the technology and cloud computing world – where I engage matrix management of diverse teams that do not report to me, the assist customers in analyzing their existing premise technology and moving to cloud infrastructure. Success in this area requires the ability to negotiate with elements I do not control, engage stakeholders to define “successful outcomes” and to craft solutions with input from all sides. But most importantly, I am one of you – I am a citizen taxpayer who has seen their voice diminished, silenced, ignored – and yet, my views are the majority. I will be a voice for the people.</p>	<p>Years before I was elected, I was an activist for transparency and accountability in Government. I attended meetings. I gave testimony. I did presentations on the abuse of urban renewal. I studied the issues. I read the budget. I have prepared for years for this role.</p> <p>When I first ran, I promised to ask the tough questions and hold government accountable. I have stayed true to this promise.</p> <p>I promised never to vote for a property tax increase. I have stayed true to this promise.</p> <p>I return phone calls, I respond to my city email. My duty is to serve the public. I do not judge nor do I hold a grudge. And I shall continue to do so when re-elected on November 7th.</p>