

Watchmen Voter Guide for Spirit Lake City Council (2 Seats)

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

	Kyle Bowlby	Eli Gosman	Kenny Gross	Zachary Neu	Charlene Phipps	Wendy Walter
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?						Wendy Walter, Candidate, Spirit Lake, Idaho, City Council After attending City Council meetings and listening to citizens' concerns, I felt called to run for a position on the Council. I have more than 32 years of public service that would benefit the community, especially in the areas of budget preparation, analysis and management. I believe the Council should include members with diverse backgrounds and skill levels to better represent its employees, small business, and everyone in the community.
2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.						First and foremost, the Council needs to restore the public's trust by providing a fiscally conservative community. An in-depth analysis of Spirit Lake's current financial health and sustainability of its current services needs to be completed. I believe strongly in using a zero-based budgeting process where every city department justifies their annual budget requests and identifies alternative solutions for providing services, keeping fiscal responsibility at the forefront to ensure quality service and cost efficiency. Second, the Spirit Lake Council needs to look for alternative funding sources, such as grants, to offset some of the large costs for capitol projects, such as major repairs to infrastructure and to have funds set aside for emergency repairs to critical infrastructure. Lastly, this past summer we watched as nearby communities were devastated by wildland fires. I believe strongly in neighbors helping neighbors, especially assisting the elderly and inform, and would like to see our community make strides toward cleaning up our properties to reduce the impact of a wildfire in our community.
3. What are your views on the rapid growth of North Idaho?						I am a lifelong Idahoan who has enjoyed living in rural and larger communities across the state. Whether you're outdoors recreating or just sitting on your patio, North Idaho is a beautiful place to live. I understand why people want to move here; however, growth should be managed to ensure there is adequate infrastructure to sustain the growth.

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4. In your opinion what best serves the public, elected officials, or appointed officials?						This question, as I see it, is about accountability. Whether a person is appointed or elected they should be held accountable for their actions; however, elected officials are the voice of the people and represent the public's interests and are held accountable when we exercise our right to vote.
5. What improvements should be made to the city councils' role in the design and authorization of new developments?						Recently, a new subdivision was approved by the Spirit Lake City Council. The Council asked for public comment at the Planning and Zoning meeting and the ensuing City Council meeting; however, there were several who felt strongly that the Council had already made their decision before the public's input was considered. The City Council should make sure the public's concerns are fully addressed and responded to before making a final decision.
6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?						The decision to cut, eliminate, or privatize services should not be made until a budget analysis is completed to ensure sound decisions are made for our community.
7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities and why?						No, I do not believe this would be a wise decision for Spirit Lake. Spirit Lake has been issued a Moratorium by the State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) restricting growth within the city limits due to inadequate infrastructure. Considerations to expand beyond our jurisdiction should not be considered at this time.
8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increase taxes?						By utilizing the zero-based budgeting process and only utilizing funds that are necessary to provide services to our citizens. In addition, we would look for grant funding to support needed capital projects and upgrades to current infrastructure and services. It is also critical to have reserves for infrastructure emergency repairs.
9. What is your opinion of the increased push for affordable housing?						With the current state of our economy and the price of housing in North Idaho, I am empathetic to the need for affordable housing in our communities. It is important that we work through Planning and Zoning and City Council processes and with a lot of public input to determine where we would establish it in our community to ensure it does not have an adverse effect on the community.

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<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 is imperative that all government provides adequate opportunities for public input whether in the form of public hearings, townhall meetings, and open door policy for one-on-one discussions as long as we work within the guidelines of the public meeting laws.</p> <p>In Spirit Lake, we have properties within the city limits owned by individuals who currently cannot build due to the DEQ Moratorium. Individual landowners within our city limits should have priority to purchase building permits over builders and developers.</p>
<p>11. What is your opinion of "Smart Cities" and how they apply to North Idaho?</p>						<p>I believe there is a place in all business to utilize technology for creating efficiencies in services and for cost savings. As a government agency Spirit Lake should look at all options for improving services and saving tax dollars for the community.</p> <p>During a recent tour of the Spirit Lake water and sewer infrastructure, I learned how they are using technology for staff efficiency. Outside of regular business hours, the Public Works staff can troubleshoot system issues from their homes. In addition, there are times when they need to start portions of the sprinkling systems in the evening hours, which can be done using this same technology. It eliminates unnecessary trips to the treatment plant after hours, reducing employee overtime, reducing wear and tear on city vehicles, and reducing employee safety risks.</p>
<p>12. Should the concept of "equitable outcome" be implemented as a part of the city council's decision-making process? Why or why not?</p>						<p>Everyone should be treated equally and have access to local government and its processes in one form or other. In a small community such as Spirit Lake, there are many who may not have access to technological options for keeping up with the government processes, notices of meetings, agendas, etc. It's important to ensure everyone has access to the same information.</p>

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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. If there was an issue that would be, or appear to be, a conflict of interest, I would abstain from voting on these matters.
14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?						<p>I am a lifelong Idahoan who grew up on the family farm where the importance of working hard, being honest, and helping others was instilled in me.</p> <p>I retired two years ago from a 32-year career in public service. Seventeen of those years were in municipal law enforcement and 15 years in Idaho State Government. In the last 9+ years of my career, I was the Business Program Manager for the State of Idaho's Wildland Fire Program, where I managed a multi-million-dollar budget, policies, procedures, billings, contracts, agreements, and annual audits.</p> <p>Over the last two years, I have seen the public's trust in our local government diminish. A lot of the issues being raised by our citizens surround the very things I have experience with during my career.</p> <p>Restoring the public's trust is not a small feat; however, it can be accomplished with leadership and communication skills, strong work ethic, and engaging others, a team approach to ensure there are clear policies and procedures to provide consistency, transparency, and integrity for all city business. I believe I possess these skills and would be an asset to the Spirit Lake Council.</p>