

City of Coeur d'Alene Mayor

	Dan Gookin	Debbie Loffman	Woody McEvers	John Pulsipher
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	<p>Dan Gookin</p> <p>Mayor of Coeur d'Alene</p> <p>I'm running because we need leadership in city hall. As a council member for the past 14 years, I've never seen as much inaction and indecision from the mayor's office as I have over the past 4 years.</p>	<p>My name is Debbie Loffman and I'm running for Mayor of Coeur d'Alene.</p> <p>There are three main reasons for my candidacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I want to be a voice for people in our community who don't feel heard. * I want to bring a Christian perspective to Coeur d'Alene government. * I have a servant's heart and I want to serve the people in our community. <p>I am a conservative Republican.</p>	<p>Woody McEvers Mayor CDA</p> <p>Having been appointed as Mayor for the last 12 months has given me the opportunity to see our city from a different perspective – even different from serving on the City Council. I have been grateful to have served under four different Mayors in the last 30 years and with many past Council members. I have learned many different approaches, styles and successes.</p> <p>I approach Life in a positive and collaborative way. That's who I am.</p> <p>As Mayor, that has not changed and will not change.</p> <p>Our city has a very positive history in so many ways, I believe our citizens are grateful and appreciative of how our city approaches challenges. I know we also have at times had a difficult history, and our growth brings concerns for many. But we have worked through these issues in the past and will continue to do so in the future.</p>	<p>John Pulsipher, Mayor of Coeur d'Alene</p>

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<p>2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.</p>	<p>A major problem with Coeur d'Alene is that your City Council is often kept out of the decision-making process and relegated to acting as a rubber stamp for unelected staff. As your next mayor, I will remedy this problem by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening up communications to council, which is sorely lacking. Council is uninformed and therefore makes uninformed decisions. 2. Establishing a city policy manual. Yes, the city lacks a policy manual, which is how staff gets away with making policy decisions to detriment of the Council and the public they represent. 3. Making the city more business friendly by cutting regulations, improving response times, and basically getting out of the way. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thoughtful, responsible growth that protects the small-town character and charm of Coeur d'Alene 2. Innovative ideas that enhance the livability of our city. 3. Term limits for those in elected office. 	<p>Coeur d'Alene has always been a positive experience for me. Friendly, Helpful and Beautiful. Positive is how I see this community. Always willing to find a path to make things better for all. I have always been grateful and appreciate our city's connection to learning from our past. Improving our communication with our citizens can be improved. Increased enforcement of Traffic violations. Some control of our Turkey and Rabbit population</p>	<p>The city can be improved by balancing the budget and informing and engaging citizens.</p> <p>As mayor, I will balance the budget by ensuring tourists contribute to our services and amenities by increasing vacation rental permit fees and creating a lodging tax. The lodging tax will be voluntary until I work with state legislators to amend Idaho code, allowing a permanent lodging tax. The truth is that homeowners already pay enough tax.</p> <p>The city can be improved with a more engaged citizenry. When citizens are engaged, they are informed. When they are informed, they provide input early on and help shape policy and development. Engaged citizens serve. I would like to see citizens working with city staff to keep our city beautiful, clean, and safe. Many already serve in this way, but there is no organization.</p>

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<p>3. In your opinion, is growth in North Idaho being handled appropriately?</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The city mishandles growth by making it difficult for developers to create attractive, affordable housing. Stumbling blocks along the way include the planning process and building departments. Often a planner will say "no" to a project as it's introduced, which doesn't respect the process. We need more responsive inspections and quicker turnaround times.</p> <p>For the future, density is the way to accommodate growth with the insistence on open spaces. Right now, density is achieved by reducing setbacks and putting housing closer together. This approach creates sprawl. But adding greenspace requirements, density can be achieved in an attractive way and promotes growth without becoming an eyesore.</p>	<p>The subject of growth in Coeur d'Alene is probably the biggest challenge we face as a city. When I talk to people in our community, they are upset about the high-rises going up downtown. They don't want Coeur d'Alene to turn into Boise, Seattle, Portland or Sacramento. The majority in our community wants to preserve the small-town charm that makes our city unique. I agree with the recommendations of height limits that were written up in the CDA Press.</p> <p>Re-zoning is at the heart of density. To control growth, we have to control switching from lower density zoning to higher density zoning.</p>	<p>Rapid growth without expected revenue is the biggest issue. Because I'm a positive person and don't come to issues with a flamethrower, I will continue to work with and create relationships with our legislators. They need to understand regularly how their decisions impact our city's operating expenses, and having a constructive relationship with them can help them make better decisions.</p> <p>I will keep working on controlling expenses – I understand the city's budget, and I go through expenses regularly to ensure staff are trying to be creative and frugal.</p>	<p>City engineers occasionally present traffic studies to the city council. They forecast intersections and give them a letter grade that assesses usability. The city is on track for really poor grades! So, in that aspect, growth is not being handled appropriately. We need to improve our infrastructure. This could include widening Atlas and working with adjacent municipalities to create the Huetter bypass.</p>

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<p>4. As cities face increasing costs to pay for city services including law enforcement, fire districts, schools and increased traffic due to increased home developments, what are your suggestions so that growth pays for itself?</p>	<p>The problem for the City of Coeur d'Alene, as well for other cities in Idaho, is that the state legislature changed the rules for our budgeting process. Ironically, their efforts at "property tax relief" resulted in ever-increasing budgets to make up for the shortfall created. We can only budget for 90% of new growth, which by simple math means that growth doesn't pay for itself. Similar restrictions apply to urban renewal, which makes this tool fiscally unattractive for cities and taxpayers.</p> <p>Even with our former budgetary system restored, one issue we face in Coeur d'Alene is the influx of tourists over the summer. This increase in our population is a burden on our first responders as well as parks and streets. To help offset this effect, I propose a bed tax to help our visitors support the services that they use. This bed tax would be a shot in the arm and provide true property tax relief. I shall work with legislators in the next session to see this change enacted.</p>	<p>I had a long conversation with our city's Comptroller so I have a good understanding of where the city's income is coming from and allocated. I would begin by talking to all the heads of our city's departments asking how we can improve efficiency and reduce spending. Growth cannot outpace infrastructure.</p>	<p>Doing more with less. Controlling costs, collaboration between city departments, creating custom software integrations to support the different needs throughout the city with creative solutions. I don't see the issue as being as simple as "cut back services or raise taxes". The issues around growth include improving the usefulness of impact fees and working with our legislature to help us move in that direction. Our Streets Department does traffic and street maintenance studies that project short- and long-term improvements. Also, our city departments work to take on more projects in-house instead of contracting out projects (i.e. Road paving, concrete work and winter road safety procedures). Ongoing relationships with other cities, highway districts and ITD can be an effective revenue source and have savings potential, while benefiting our whole community. Elected officials must be candid about the increasing costs of the services that citizens need and want and expect.</p>	<p>I don't believe the mayor should have any increased role in the planning or authorization of new developments. The city's comprehensive plan designates zoning, the city staff and planning commission review development requests, and the city council votes to approve or deny development proposals. Each of these steps is subject to governing laws and property rights. If a project is denied without just cause, the city is at risk for legal action and bills--payable by the homeowners/taxpayers. One area where a good mayor can impact planning is through communications with other municipalities and individuals who hold stewardship over resources (aquifer, etc).</p>

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5. What improvements should be made to the mayor's role in the planning and authorization of new developments?	<p>The mayor has only a small role in the planning process. A development only comes to city council when it's a zone change or annexation. Even then, the mayor doesn't vote unless there's a tie.</p> <p>As mayor, I can provide direction by working with council to set policy. This policy works as the guidelines for planning and authorization of new developments. Plus, such policy holds more weight than the Comp Plan, which serves as a guide and can be freely ignored (and has been ignored) by the City Council.</p> <p>As far as improving the process, planning must be more receptive and less dismissive of new projects. The goal is to reduce the cost, which helps make housing more affordable.</p>	<p>The role of Mayor is executive, not legislative like the council. The job is leadership, building a cohesive team and communicating vision. It is very important who we have representing us as a city.</p> <p>The Mayor represents the city like an ambassador.</p> <p>I have many good ideas that I would like to present as a vision for the future.</p>	<p>City Mayor only votes to break a tie. You can ask questions and provide guidance to staff and developers. City Council is the decision makers.</p> <p>New developments go through our Planning and Zoning Commission and they have to justify their findings according to Idaho State Codes.</p>	<p>The city is already cutting services. One example is the parking lot and soccer field near Bellerive that sit locked and vacant, respectively. There may be other services that could be cut, eliminated, or privatized. It is interesting to note that the city recently created its own janitorial positions because it was cheaper than renewing a private contract. The city pays staff hundreds of thousands of dollars in several departments to lead their teams and departments. There are likely areas to save. As mayor, I will meet with department heads to discuss and discover where they can save 1%. If each department can save 1%, the city can be significantly closer to a balanced budget.</p>

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6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	<p>No.</p> <p>Cutting services is the sign of a failed budget process. I believe we can cut a lot in the budget without the need to cut personnel or services.</p> <p>The question of privatization is a good one, as often private industry can do things more effectively and cheaper than government. The problem is that few local businesses offer services at the scale needed to be a good replacement for what the city does.</p>	<p>I have not identified services or programs that should be cut or privatized, but I intend to study and identify ways our city can operate more efficiently.</p>	<p>Coeur d'Alene is very conservative when adding or subtracting services. We are always looking at potential ways of saving money and consolidating services. We have tried some contracting Grassy Swale maintenance on Ramsey Rd and Janitorial services in City Hall and the our Library.</p>	<p>This is an interesting question. I'm not aware of any rural communities seeking access to city water or sewer. If there are please reach out to me at johnformayor@bettercda.com so I can learn more about the circumstances. Having said that, access to city-managed water and sewer should only be extended to rural communities if those communities apply for and receive annexation. Once annexed into the city, those communities would have access to city water and sewer. However, all people have "access" to city water and sewer. Just take a trip to the public library and you can enjoy both.</p>

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7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities, why or why not?	<p>The city has a "good neighbor" policy where it will provide water and sewer access to residents outside the city. For example, if a well fails, water can be provided. The policy states that the owner must annex when feasible. Ditto for wastewater services.</p> <p>One of the reasons for having a city is to provide services such as water and sewer. Along with streets, fire, police, and other city services, these are the reasons people choose to live in a city. Those wanting these services who live within the city's area of impact are free to annex. But the city cannot provide these services to non-residents unless they qualify for the good neighbor policy.</p>	<p>I say no expansion of water and sewer to rural communities. Let's not expand the current infrastructure, it's expensive and we are having a difficult time affording the infrastructure we already have.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The Water and Sewer systems in Coeur d'Alene are owned and operated by the city. If you annexed into the city, you are required to have our services. Those services are a major factor in our growth control.</p>	<p>The reserve fund has decreased by nearly one-third after taking into account this new fiscal year. This decrease happened in spite of increasing property taxes. The city administrator indicated it will likely be necessary to increase property taxes over the next several years. My proposal is to relieve residents and property owners of this burden by leveraging hotel and short-term rental (STR) stays as well as STR fees. As mayor, I will work with the Hagadone Corporation and state legislators to implement a local lodging tax that directly funds city parks, streets, police, and fire departments. This way tourists contribute to the services they utilize and the burden is shared between residents and tourists.</p>

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8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increasing taxes?	Aside from working on the bed tax, I plan on offering employee incentives for cost-cutting. I floated this idea a few years back, but staff scoffed at it. Even so, the workers tell me that they could save a lot. I believe them! While this plan may not result in huge savings, my goal is to cut spending and have the city live within its means. I believe employee incentives are an excellent way to do so.	Post Falls has a large reserve fund mainly from impact fees. As in answer #4 I would start by talking to all the heads of our city's departments asking how we can improve efficiency and reduce spending.	Rapid growth without expected revenue is the Cities' biggest issue. Because I believe in a positive approach to issues, I will continue to work with and create relationships with our legislators. They need to understand how some of their decisions impact our city's operating expenses. Having a constructive relationship with them can maybe help them make better decisions. I will keep working on controlling expenses – I understand the city's budget and go through expenses regularly to ensure we are being creative and frugal. Our city maintains a 25% Fund balance to guarantee being able to pay the cities obligation. Which is the recommendation from Government Finance Association.	The reserve fund has decreased by nearly one-third after taking into account this new fiscal year. This decrease happened in spite of increasing property taxes. The city administrator indicated it will likely be necessary to increase property taxes over the next several years. My proposal is to relieve residents and property owners of this burden by leveraging hotel and short-term rental (STR) stays as well as STR fees. As mayor, I will work with the Hagadone Corporation and state legislators to implement a local lodging tax that directly funds city parks, streets, police, and fire departments. This way tourists contribute to the services they utilize and the burden is shared between residents and tourists.

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<p>9. What is your opinion on affordable housing? Is it something that the city should be pursuing?</p>	<p>The best thing that the government can do to make housing more affordable is to Get Out Of The Way!</p> <p>The irony of any elected official in the city of Coeur d'Alene talking about "affordable housing" is that with only a few exceptions, the full council supports building luxury homes in urban renewal districts for wealthy out-of-town owners. How is this "affordable"?</p> <p>What the city's urban renewal agency does is a slap in the face to anyone wanting affordable housing. So while city government's role is limited in creating affordable housing, we can halt the area's gentrification by putting the brakes on what our urban renewal agency does.</p>	<p>Affordable housing is a challenge everywhere.</p> <p>Coeur d'Alene natives have a tendency to move to outlying areas for more affordable housing.</p> <p>I know a single mom who is concerned that she won't be able to purchase a home for a long time. I told her, "Instead of throwing your money away in expensive rent, have you ever thought of buying a mobile home? The space rent varies, but is usually only \$350 per month, then the cost of the mobile home. Find a minor fixer, fix it up, and now you own something and are acquiring equity. Each payment is reducing what you owe on the mobile home. Over time, you can accumulate enough funds in equity that when you sell, you could purchase a home if desired."</p> <p>I like the model of mobile home parks as a way to supply some affordable housing instead of too many high-density apartment complexes or government subsidized housing.</p>	<p>Affordable housing is a major topic in most Idaho cities. Government is not really the best way to fix it. There are many ideas, but the solutions are not just one simple fix. It will continue to take many different parts of the community working together – non-profits, developers, realtors, community neighborhood associations and the city staff. Our council has committed support through our Urban Renewal district. I'm thankful for Councilmember Kiki Miller for her continued dedication and work on this issue.</p>	<p>A few years ago, I was recruiting across the country for a top dentist to work in my dental practice. I conducted several interviews and found a candidate that would be an amazing fit for our community. Our pay is quite good by local and national standards. However, he stated the cost of housing in CDA was just too much. A dentist! He wasn't the only candidate that balked at moving to Coeur d'Alene due to the cost of housing. In addition, I have four sons who would love to live and work here for the rest of their lives. I want them to stay here, too. Based on the cost of homes and available jobs and industries, I'm not sure they can live here without taking significant financial risk or educational debt. The solution has to be multi-factorial. We need better jobs and industry. We need more homes. We need different types of homes. We don't need subsidized government housing, but we need, in the right places, townhomes, twin homes, and apartments.</p>

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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 values. What would you do differently to change the public's perception?</p>	<p>Several times over the past few years, efforts have been made by elected officials and city staff to stifle public comments. I have opposed these efforts every step of the way. But I believe the real point here is public involvement with the process.</p> <p>For too long, the City of Coeur d'Alene's citizen committees are dominated by what seems like the same group of people. Some members have served on a committee for 20 years or more! One person serves on several committees. This stagnation is often why I vote against the mayor's committee appointments - I'm the only one to do so.</p> <p>When I'm Mayor, I plan on opening up our citizen committees to better represent all of Coeur d'Alene. I hope to establish policy whereby committees can no longer nominate their own members. We need active committees with members from all parts of the city, especially those who may have new and different perspectives.</p>	<p>As in question #1, one of the main reasons I'm running for Mayor is because a lot of people in our community feel they don't have a voice. They don't feel they are being heard. I want to listen to them and work to implement their constructive suggestions and ideas, creating an environment where they are taken seriously.</p> <p>Many feel frustrated and have a lack of trust in their city officials. I want to change this perception. Periodic Townhall meetings are a good way to exchange ideas and have my finger on the pulse of our community.</p>	<p>Sometimes during public comments, the focus is on a subject that needs some clarification or explanation of the purpose. Sometimes it is used for subjects that don't relate to City business, or State and City codes do not address our citizens' point of view. We always encourage our Citizens to contact city staff for questions and directions to help address their issues.</p>	<p>I recognize that residents often feel their voice is not heard. Part of the problem is that citizens get involved too late! We need them to get involved sooner. One of my top priorities is better communication with the public. When citizens are informed, they will participate. Their timely participation will allow a better response from the city council. Laws, policies, and outcomes will likely represent a solution of compromise. This is the root of the problem.</p>

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11. What is your opinion on “Smart Cities” and how they apply to North Idaho?	I have consistently opposed efforts at "smart cities" and big government. I serve on the KMPO and actively opposed their planned traffic center. I have opposed the addition of new cell towers. I was the only council member to vote against the 5G agreement, where I really put the cellular provider's representative to the test. I did so because citizens contacted me with their concerns and it's my duty to represent them. I have worked to assure citizens that our traffic cameras use benign technology and that the police use of license plate readers is heavily regulated to avoid potential abuse.	I am opposed to "Smart Cities". It is overbearing and controlling. We need to be aware of subtle ways this concept is being implement in Coeur d'Alene, such as traffic cameras, facial recognition readers, license plate readers are all are an infringement on our freedom. Free people are not surveilled.	Not in support of Smart Cities, I think the spirit of Idaho has always been somewhat self-reliant independence and letting our constitution help guide our future.	I have witnessed several people complain about the idea of smart cities. Most of the concerns seem to be regarding privacy, tracking, and health. I am not aware of the city of Coeur d'Alene seeking any designation of a Smart City. This is something that should only be pursued if there is public benefit and interest. I like to think CDA is already smart enough.
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. It is not government's job to tilt the table in favor of the loudest voice in the room.	The concept that everyone deserves equality is unfair to those who work hard to achieve greater results. It's a socialist concept that everyone should have the same outcome.	Our cities codes address balance in decision making. Council supports making decisions that are Fair and Just.	I'm not sure what type of situation this would apply to. Usually, the city council must make decisions on a yes/no basis and is held strictly to the laws and codes that govern certain situations. If a solution arises where two parties are at odds and a compromise can be achieved, that is something that should be considered. Compromises require all parties to be on board. Otherwise one or both parties have their rights violated and can take legal action. I would like to know if this question is based on something that has happened or something that is happening.

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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?	I do not own property in the city (or anywhere) beyond my home. I run my own business out of my house with no employees and no local connections. Sadly, I have turned down the opportunity to serve on various non-profit boards, but do so to avoid any conflict of interest. I belong to no organizations that use or ask for government services.	I don't have any conflict of interest. My business experience that I will explain in answer #14 will show that it will be an asset to me and our community.	No	No. The position of mayor is part-time and carries a salary and benefits. I see patients for ~20 hours per week in my dental practice and benefit from partners and an infrastructure that allow me to serve the community in this way.
14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	<p>My professional background, and my career, is about explaining complex topics in a way that anyone can understand. My enemy is obfuscation, or those who hold information close to boost their own importance or to sway opinion. My ideals of explaining things in an understandable manner fit in well with my consistent support for government transparency and accountability.</p> <p>As a city council member for 14 years, I understand how the city works. I've scrutinized city budgets since 2003. I am ready day one to get the city back into shape, to respect the will of council, and to restore leadership at city hall.</p>	<p>I was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota in a wonderful Baptist family. I moved to a suburb of Sacramento in my 20's and started a tenant screening company. It grew to having 11 employees and I sold five franchises of it in different states. In 1997, I received a good offer and sold the whole company. In 1998 I got my real estate license and in 2005 I got my Broker's license and opened my own real estate and property management company. Property Management is not an easy industry to do well in and this year, I received this message with an award: "Loffman Property Management has been selected twelve years in a row for best property management company and now qualifies for the 2025 Rocklin Business Hall of Fame." With the help of excellent agents working for me, I am now semi-retired.</p> <p>We moved to Coeur d'Alene five years ago because my entire family wanted to live in a conservative city in a red state. We LOVE it here! I have two children and two grandchildren, all loving it here.</p>	<p>Having been appointed as Mayor for the last 12 months has given me the opportunity to see our city from a different perspective – even different from serving on the City Council. I have been grateful to have served under four different Mayors in the last 30 years and with many past Council members. I have learned many different approaches, styles and successes. I approach Life in a positive and collaborative way. That's who I am. As Mayor, that has not changed and will not change. Our city has a very positive history in so many ways, I believe our citizens are grateful and appreciative of how our city approaches challenges. I know we also have at times had a difficult history, and our growth brings concerns for many. But we have worked through these issues in the past and will</p>	<p>As a longtime business owner and resident of CDA, I am familiar with the city, its leaders, and processes. I have experience leading people in my business, which has nearly 100 employees, here in CDA, Post Falls, and Hayden. I have not held public office, but I have been elected by my peers to serve in leadership roles. I was elected President of the Idaho Panhandle Dental Society, where I represented dentists across our region and worked on issues of professional standards, education, and community outreach. I was also elected to the Board of Directors for the Merritt Office Park Association, where I helped oversee budgets, maintenance of parklike settings, seasonal lighting, parking lots, and streets. In both roles, I approached decision-making with transparency, fiscal responsibility, and a focus on</p>

		<p>My husband is a Meteorologist and was on the air in Sacramento for 25 years forecasting the weather. His intern, Randy Mann was weekend Weatherman at KREM and writes for the CDA Press.</p> <p>I would like to use the wisdom I have acquired in business to step into a new role as Mayor of Coeur d'Alene.</p> <p>Thank you for reaching out to me.</p>	<p>continue to do so in the future.</p>	<p>serving the long-term interests of the people I represented. That same approach will guide me as mayor.</p>
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