

City of Post Falls Council Member Seat #2

	Aaron Plew	James Steffensen
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	No Response Received	My name is James Steffensen, and I am running for Post Falls City Council seat 2 because public service is both a responsibility and an opportunity to give back to the community that has given so much to my family and me. With a background in project management, I bring leadership, problem-solving skills, and experience managing growth, budgets, and complex projects responsibly. As a 15-year resident of Post Falls, I have a personal stake in the city's future—for myself, my children, and grandchildren. If elected, I will focus on guiding sustainable growth, supporting families and local businesses, and protecting the character of our community while fostering opportunity and prosperity for generations to come.
2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.	No Response Received	As Post Falls continues to grow, managing that growth responsibly is key to preserving the city's character and quality of life. Thoughtful planning can help ensure infrastructure keeps pace with new development, including roads, utilities, and public services. Affordable housing is also an important consideration, as providing a variety of housing options allows families, seniors, and workers to live in the community they contribute to. Balancing growth with housing accessibility helps Post Falls remain a thriving, inclusive, and well-planned city for current and future residents. To improve these topics we need to increase the amount of communication between all levels of government and with residents. We need everyone to come to workshops, meetings and open house so we can gather information from everyone and make the best decision for everyone.
3. In your opinion, is growth in North Idaho being handled appropriately?	No Response Received	In my opinion, the city is doing good, but there is always room for improvement in planning and development. Post Falls has seen remarkable growth over the past five years, and even before that people were moving here for many reasons. We can no longer think of ourselves as a small town of 10,000; with nearly 50,000 residents, planning and development must be approached differently. Current data shows growth isn't slowing, so we need to plan thoughtfully for the next 5 to 30 years to ensure infrastructure, housing, and services keep pace while maintaining the character of our community.
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?	No Response Received	As Post Falls grows, it's important that new development helps support the city's infrastructure and services. Thoughtful planning can include impact fees, developer contributions, and careful zoning to ensure roads, utilities, schools, and emergency services can keep pace with population growth. Encouraging mixed-use development and higher-density housing in appropriate areas can make growth more efficient, while supporting local businesses helps expand the tax base. By planning responsibly, the city can balance growth with maintaining quality services and the character of the community, ensuring that development contributes to the long-term sustainability of Post Falls.
5. What improvements should be made to the city council's role in the planning and authorization of new developments?	No Response Received	The City Council plays a key role in guiding responsible growth, and improvements can focus on increasing transparency, communication, and long-term planning. Council members should ensure that development proposals are reviewed with input from residents, planning staff, and other commissions, balancing community character, infrastructure capacity, and environmental impact. Strengthening processes for public engagement and setting clear criteria for approvals can help ensure new developments support Post Falls' growth while maintaining quality of life, protecting property values, and preserving the city's character for current and future residents.

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6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized?	No Response Received	In my opinion, no city services in Post Falls need to be cut, eliminated, or privatized at this time. Essential services—such as law enforcement, fire protection, utilities, and public works—are critical to maintaining quality of life and public safety. However, this should be reviewed with each budget cycle to identify any changes or improvements that may be needed. The focus should remain on responsible planning, careful budgeting, and ensuring growth pays for itself so that Post Falls can continue providing high-quality services while meeting the needs of a growing community.
7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities, why or why not?	No Response Received	City-managed water and sewer systems are better for the long-term growth and environmental sustainability of Post Falls. Extending these services to surrounding rural communities would be very costly, and it only makes sense if there is a clear financial benefit for both the city and the residents of the rural area. Before considering such expansion, the city must ensure it is financially feasible. If a rural area is within the city's future growth boundary and could be annexed in the near term, then discussions could begin. Otherwise, extending services would not be practical or responsible for the city or its taxpayers.
8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increasing taxes?	No Response Received	Over the past 14 years, Post Falls has maintained a healthy reserve fund through conservative budgeting, careful planning, and growth-focused revenue rather than raising taxes on existing residents. Since 2009, new tax revenue from existing taxpayers has increased just 4%, while cumulative inflation has risen nearly 45%. The city's tax rate remains low at \$2.39 per \$1,000 of assessed value, down from \$6.76 in 1995. Post Falls has also earned the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association since 2014, reflecting transparency and excellence in budgeting. This responsible fiscal management ensures the city's long-term financial stability and positions Post Falls to meet the needs of a growing community for years to come.
9. What is your opinion on affordable housing? Is it something that the city should be pursuing?	No Response Received	Yes, the city should be actively pursuing affordable housing because, without it, our kids and grandchildren may struggle to find a place to live locally. "Affordable" can mean different things to different people, which is why the city and the development community need to use accurate, relevant data when planning these projects. The Miracle on Britton development is a great example of how collaboration between the city, developers, and the community can create successful housing solutions. The city is also exploring new zoning for cottage homes, tiny homes, and other "missing middle" starter homes, which could help young families enter the housing market sooner rather than later.
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?	No Response Received	I would promote transparency, communication, and active engagement. This means making it easier for residents to provide input, clearly explaining how public comments are considered in decision-making, and providing timely feedback on outcomes. I would encourage more community meetings, surveys, and open forums to ensure all voices are heard. By actively listening, documenting public input, and demonstrating how it shapes policy, the City Council can show residents that their perspectives truly matter and that decisions reflect the community's needs and values.

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11. What is your opinion on “Smart Cities” and how they apply to North Idaho?	No Response Received	Smart Cities use technology and data to improve efficiency, safety, and quality of life in a community. In North Idaho, including Post Falls, Smart City initiatives can help manage growth, optimize traffic flow, improve utilities, and enhance public services while preserving the region’s character and natural beauty. Technology can also support better planning, resource management, and environmental monitoring. Additionally, platforms for public communication can increase transparency and engagement. It’s important, however, that these tools are implemented thoughtfully, balancing innovation with privacy, security, and community values, so growth is sustainable and residents continue to enjoy a safe, vibrant, and well-planned city.
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 Response Received	An equitable outcome means making decisions that are fair and just by considering the diverse needs, challenges, and circumstances of all residents. It goes beyond treating everyone the same and focuses on ensuring that city services, resources, and opportunities are accessible to everyone, including families, seniors, workers, and historically underserved communities. By prioritizing equity, the city can help all residents benefit from growth, programs, and development, ensuring that every member of the community has a real opportunity to thrive and that no one is left behind as Post Falls grows and evolves.
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 Response Received	No
14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?	No Response Received	When my wife and I moved to Post Falls 15 years ago, we had one toddler; today, we have a high schooler and a middle schooler. I hold a degree in Business Management and have worked in banking for 19 years, with the past 15 focused on product and project management. I have also volunteered extensively in the community, coaching through the Parks and Recreation Department, and currently serve as chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission, where I have been a member for eight years. These experiences reflect my deep, long-term commitment to the city and give me a broad range of skills and knowledge that make me well-prepared to serve in this role and help shape Post Falls’ future.