

City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Darin Fowler Position Sought: seat (a) Ward: 4 (SW)

1. Please describe why you are seeking the position of City Councilor.

As a 40-year resident of Grants Pass, I desire to see our appealing and attractive town maintain its draw to both those who visit and reside here. I believe a City Councilor has the responsibility to serve those who elected him/her without a personal agenda and it is my desire to do just that.

2. If elected, do you have any specific things you would like to accomplish during your term on the City Council?

To review the City Charter (unchanged since 1976) in order to consider any possible changes/updates. I also certainly wish to help restore the trust and confidence that the people of Grants Pass have in our city government, while continuing to encourage economic stability and growth.

3. Please provide us with a listing of your prior community and civic involvement in Grants Pass (or other communities).

Urban Area Planning Commission (Oct. '07 – present), Rural Area Planning Commission (6 mos.), Downtown River District Committee (2 yrs.), Habitat for Humanity (5 ½ yrs.), Youth Athletic Coach (Boys & Girls Club, GPYSC, YMCA: 1992 – 2001), Sunday School Teacher (2003 – present).

4. Please tell us your understanding of the role of Economic Development and what you believe should occur with Economic Development during your term.

As a small business owner I feel that city government must encourage new employment opportunities and help established businesses through these lean economic times, using all available resources and mechanisms including *temporary* reductions in fees and S.D.C.'s if necessary.

5. What role do you believe Tourism promotion and the Tourism program should play in Grants Pass over the next four years?

The Council must be proactive in encouraging any new *viable* tourism opportunities. I also believe that the Council must be willing to work with those currently involved in the local tourism industry, when and if the need arises for them to appear before the Council. Tourism is absolutely vital to the health of our economy and I cannot understate its importance.

6. The decisions on the Urban Growth Boundary will be made in the next couple of years. Please tell us your understanding of the purpose, and your views on the extent (if any) that the Urban Growth Boundary should be expanded.

To comply with the State of Oregon's requirements for land inventories, the Urban Growth Boundary must be expanded to plan for the next 20 years. Because of geographical constraints, the boundary should be expanded at or near the hard-working committee's recommendation(s).

7. What is your position on signage for local businesses (i.e. it should be expanded, reduced, regulated, unregulated, etc.), and why?

The existing code related to signage has the goal of maintaining the "small town" feel we all enjoy. To determine which signs are complimentary and which ones are unattractive or obtrusive will always be controversial, but completely necessary. The appeal process allows for possible variations (on a case by case basis) and will help maintain a consistent look for our city.

8. The community survey annually asks about how citizens perceive growth and the impacts of growth on the community. Please describe for us your position on community growth.

Because of the attractiveness of our city and surrounding ecosystem, community growth will happen with or without thoughtful planning. Only forward-thinking and careful planning can prepare us for the coming years. Infrastructure must not be stretched thin, which was/is the main issue in the Redwood Area. Now is the time to plan for future growth, before the pressure of another economic expansion is upon us.

9. The City is actively evaluating parks and recreation plans. What is your position on the proposed park plan, and to what extent do you believe that parks should be directly funded by local taxing efforts?

The proposed parks plan is thorough and comprehensive, and I definitely believe that Grants Pass needs more parkland. However, the continuing misconceptions and misrepresentations that make headlines concerning the plan could derail the planning process. Finding ways to accurately inform the public that "planning issues" are separate from "funding issues" is necessary to ensure the plan's success. That said, I believe that the funding plan should *encourage* volunteerism, the securing of grants, and private donations, but should not rely solely on these methods of financing if they fall short of the necessary funds to complete the creation and maintenance of parks in our area.

10. Please let us know your position on the funding of Public Safety (fire, police, building enforcement).

Maintaining Public Safety is extremely important to the security and well-being of our community. Although I have always voted for the public safety levies in the past, it would be ideal for the city to find a way to permanently fund our Public Safety departments, rather than relying on costly levies.

11. Do you believe taxes and fees in Grants Pass are too high, too low, or about right, and to what extent do you believe these should be changed?

Taxes in Grants Pass are currently at an appropriate level, but any increase in the present economic downturn would be unwise. I believe that the possibility of *temporarily* lowering fees in an effort to encourage new businesses and provide new job opportunities for our residents should be considered.

12. In your opinion, what role does the downtown play in the future of Grants Pass?

In the future the Council must work to preserve the historic charm, encourage redevelopment, and continue to promote the core businesses of downtown Grants Pass. A vital downtown plays an important role in the economic health of our community, and must be considered a high priority for the Council.

13. Please provide us with any other information you believe makes you the best candidate for City Council.

I have lived on Oak Street in Southwest Grants Pass for almost forty years, including the nearly twenty years that I've resided in my present home – across the street from the house I grew up in. I have watched this town change from one dependent on a logging and mill economy to a more diverse economy, making it an extremely attractive place to raise families and conduct business. My concern for the vital role the Council plays has brought me to a point where I feel compelled to get involved as a councilor. The love I have for my hometown, as well as the experience I have gained through community service and civic involvement, gives me the confidence to know that I can contribute to the promising future of Grants Pass.