

## **Matt Miklave Responses, Question 1-6**

**Question 1:** Looking at the city's budget for the coming fiscal year, what would you have done differently?

- A.) Are there areas you see that could have been cut?
- B.) Would you have reallocated money to other departments/projects?

Please be specific. We all know you think the Norwalk taxpayers are beleaguered, that property taxes are too high and city services are not good enough. But we need specifics.

**Answer:** The 2013-14 Operating Budget (which is this year's budget cycle) was palatable only because of a one-time favorable arbitration award under the teacher contract. We will not be able to rely on that one-time fix next year. The challenges facing Norwalk are significant. We have to hold the line on further tax increases. We have to implement the common core curriculum. We have to develop a jobs creation plan that supports local entrepreneurs and innovators. We have to invest more resources to combat violent and quality of life crime. And we have to fix our infrastructure. There is a lot of work to do and we have to look both short-term and long-term to develop a credible plan to manage our budget.

In the short term, the amount the city sets aside for future retiree health care benefits (called "OPEB") must be included in any budget solution, among other one-time fixes. (One City Official has already privately confided that OPEB is the equivalent of the City's "rainy day fund" in the event state aid is substantially reduced.) But only long-term budget reform will put Norwalk on a path to meet the ever increasing demands on our resources without raising taxes on Norwalk's struggling taxpayers. Each candidate has pledged to try to hold the line on taxes, but I am the only candidate who has set out a detailed plan on how we can achieve that goal. Vague promises and wishes are not enough. I have a concrete plan for budget reform -- a top-to-bottom assessment of the City's entire \$330 million operating budget. Just recently, one council member was able to use these principles to free up almost \$1 million from a \$20 million capital budget to invest in infrastructure. The Administration touted that this was only the third time in eight years they "scrubbed the books" to find savings. The Miklave Administration will scrub the books weekly to find savings by cutting programs or services which do not meet performance standards previously set. If we are able to find \$1 million out of a \$20 million capital budget (about 5 percent), just imagine how much we will be able to save in a \$330 million operating budget. Making PPB a daily exercise remains the key to our future.

**Question 2:** POKO's Wall Street development just got another 6-month extension despite major grumbling by some Zoning Commission members. Given the misgivings of said members and history of extensions, would you push to keep the project alive if nothing has happened in six months, or would you lead the charge to pull the plug and go back to square one?

**Answer:** It surprises me that some developers and projects (95/7 or Waypointe) seem to receive endless extensions and subsidies while the constant focus of this Administration remains the POKO development. I believe in making development a level playing field. The Miklave Administration will hold every developer to the same standards and expectations. As I previously announced, on my first day in office, I will form an Economic Accelerator Team to focus on building a series of economic accelerators to help jump start a jobs-creation program by supporting local entrepreneurs and innovators. I will invite representatives from the development community to be a part of that team. I will also ask each developer to meet with my Administration to review the status of each development, assess compliance with current agreements, and engage in a candid discussion as to the future of each project. To the extent that reasonable extensions of time are all that is needed to allow the developer to complete the project in a reasonable time horizon, then I would favor extending the deadlines. However, to the extent a developer is unable to present evidence that a further investment in time will result in a completed project, then I would lead the charge to consider alternatives including reopening the development process to allow other developers to compete. In addition, I will also work with all stakeholders to review the roles of the Zoning Commission, Planning Commission and Redevelopment Agency and their staffs to streamline the development process, while at the same time insuring that all parties and the public have an adequate opportunity to provide input.

**Question 3:** Oak Hills: There are two proposals for a practice range. One involves putting it in the woods and cutting down trees, one involves making use of a different space. There is a fear that, based on one company's past practice, the OHPA/city would front the money to build the range and hope to regain it and more through usage fees. The process, like the school superintendent search and the police chief "search;" is being kept secret. Should the OHPA be more transparent about the process? For that matter, should all of these searches and decisions be more transparent?

**Answer:** I love to play golf and would love to see a driving range at Oak Hills Park. But I question the ability of the current management team to build or manage it. I was distressed to watch as the Oak Hills Park Authority, after repeatedly claiming that they had sufficient cash on hand to make it through the winter, come to the City 90 days later and demanded a \$150,000 loan or else they would shut the course down. Now we have learned that even though the Authority has engaged in an "aggressive marketing plan," the number of rounds is below expectations. I also understand that some members of the Authority believe that the cost of routine maintenance should be paid by the City, rather than by those who use Oak Hills. These troubling developments lead me to believe that it would be exceptionally unwise for the Authority to go deeper into debt to build a driving range of any size or in any location. I will not support any effort that increases the City's risk or liability. I am deeply concerned about the lack of transparency involved in the operation of the Authority.

**Question 4:** It was reported when the city signed on for 10 years with City Carting that there was a clause that allows the city to terminate "for convenience." Some or all of you have been critical of the contract. Would you be inclined to terminate the City Carting contract? If so,

would you offset the reported savings by making cuts elsewhere? It has been reported the outsourcing save taxpayers \$110 each off their tax bills.

**Answer:** I voted against the City Carting agreements. First, just a few months previously, in response to efforts by Council Democrats to investigate single stream recycling, the Administration insisted that single stream recycling was not economically viable and the technology was untested. Yet, 90-days later, those same officials insisted that single stream recycling was a "no brainer." This sudden reversal alone creates a reason for doubt. Second, the recycling contract was contingent on a corresponding garbage hauling contract. I did not support linking the two contracts. Third, I was opposed to the privatization of garbage collection precisely because I thought that once it was contracted out, it would not be economically feasible to bring it back into DPW. Fourth, I thought that awarding a "no bid" ten-year recycling contract locked the City into a contract for far too long.

Finally, while I have heard the some City officials claim that the City Carting contracts can be terminated without penalty "for convenience," no one from Corporation Counsel's office has made that claim. I am skeptical that the contracts can be terminated without penalty for any reason. If I am elected Mayor, my administration will conduct an independent review of the City Carting agreements to assess performance under the contracts, methods to improve recycling and garbage collection, methods to eliminate or reduce offensive odors and conditions in neighborhoods, and the cost to the City of alternatives. Basically, I hope to conduct the unbiased, independent review of the issues which the City skipped over in its rush to implement the privatization plan.

**Question 5:** What needs to happen for NEON to regain the trust of the city when it comes to grants and such? We know that Moccia walked away from the agency over the scandals while Joe Mann was in office.

**Answer:** I think NEON can regain the trust of the City once the current administration, which has been openly at war with this important anti-poverty agency, is voted out of office. It is ironic how quickly some officials condemned NEON and its staff, even though many of them were then serving as members of the NEON Board of Directors and thus complicit in the issues the agency faced. But I have a different view of this agency. I believe that the new Board of Directors, which has promised a fresh start, will be able to work through the difficult financial and structural issues this agency faces. As Mayor, I will support the work of the new Board of Directors and staff to reform this agency, insure it is in compliance with all federal, state and local rules and regulations, and re-energize the support of the community. My administration will offer whatever technical and financial assistance and support it can to help in these efforts. Any financial assistance will be conditioned on complete openness and transparency with respect to accounting and auditing.

**Question 6:** This one is of special interest to us: Since we arrived in Norwalk, we have noticed a rather liberal use of executive sessions and secret searches, like the one recently used to find a superintendent. Turns out from our reporting, the majority of super searches are not secret

once it gets down to the final two or three candidates. How will you address, a.) the frequent and sometimes questionable use of executive sessions; and b.) searches for the inevitable replacements for certain high-level administrative posts?

**Answer:** I am running for Mayor to reform City government and my political party. During my eight years in office, I have watched as government officials and party insiders have worked behind closed doors to achieve their particular goals or objectives and I am running to change that "insider game." It is surprising to me that leaders and candidates in my party will claim to be reformers or fighting for openness, while meeting behind closed doors and attempting to trade votes. (During the recent DTC convention, I stopped counting the number of times an insider from one camp or the other tried to offer me "something" in exchange for my support or my abstention. I responded by telling them that if they thought they could get my vote by promising me something, then they had not been paying attention!)

My record in office shows what I will do as Mayor. I opposed attempts to conduct the public's business behind closed doors. I have consistently voted against going into executive session to discuss the terms of tentative labor contracts once those contracts were ratified by the membership because I believed the public had a right to know the terms of the "deal" before we took a vote. In 2005, I refused to serve on the Head of the Harbor Ad Hoc Development Committee because membership was conditioned on the signing of a secrecy agreement preventing the disclosure of any information to the public or any other appointed or elected official. (Basically, I would have been prevented from discussing this substantial development with other elected officials who would be asked to vote on it.)

In December 2011, when I learned that Council Members serving on the Public Works Committee had been voting in secret to approve advertising in violation of state law, I condemned the practice and supported the efforts of newly elected Committee Chair John Ignneri to end it once and for all. I have repeatedly expressed my concern about the efforts by some City and party officials (even the leadership of the Democratic Town Committee) to keep matters from public view. I drew the anger of my Party Chairman when I publicly released my response to the DTC candidate questionnaire and pledge, not believing that either should be kept secret. I note with pride the criticism of some bloggers and detractors -- that I held too many Public Hearings while I served as Chair of the Planning committee! Seriously, these anonymous insiders (who do not have the courage or conviction to identify themselves) condemn me for being "too open" and taking too much time to let the public comment on the ***hundreds of millions of dollars we are spending on economic development.***

Finally, as a newly elected council member, I was selected by my colleagues in 2002 to serve as Council President in order to help the Council express its views against the wishes of a strong-willed Democratic Mayor. I am proud of this record. I have and will continue to work for openness and transparency in all matters of government, policy and civil discourse.