

Vinny Mangiacopra responses Questions 1-4

Budget and City Carting Contract

The tough economic times we live in have caused great distress to city and state budgets all over the country. Unfortunately the current administration has failed to rise to the challenge of reforming our budget to cut waste and inefficiency. The result has been tax hike after tax hike and poor budgeting practices that seek only short-term relief.

We need to put more of a focus on the middle class and those trying to make it - to help ease their burdens so that, like our fore-fathers, there is a better chance of providing the American dream to more Americans. A sound city budget will be my top priority to that end. My first step would be a communications and energy efficiency audit and seek to cut utility heating, lighting, fuel and phone costs to save hundreds of thousands of dollars. It's a smart, easy and efficient way for the City to save money for years to come and be more environmentally conscious.

In addition, there needs to be a review of the public works services to seek reductions in contractual expenses. We need to seek ways to modify and reduce overtime costs, working with the unions in consensus-building ways. Calling any union contract a budget buster is the wrong way to conduct business. I am concerned that the current administration is too reliant on one shots and fiscal gimmicks on the revenue side, such as tax collection rate estimates. The next Mayor is likely to inherit those problems.

When it comes to the coming reassessment, Norwalk needs to have a rigorous public process and hold citizen workshops to help explain the changes that we face as a city. The City Carting deal privatizing sanitation is definitely a budget concern. I would immediately review and audit it. I believe it actually could be costing taxpayers over time, instead of producing savings as claimed by the current administration.

If the savings don't exist, or have been overstated significantly, then I would strongly consider terminating the contract and begin looking for real savings that will also lead to a higher quality of service.

As mayor, I will perform an annual Government Efficiency Review. The review will be a comprehensive examination of our budget that seeks to eliminate inefficiencies and guarantee results for the services we pay for.

The review would consist of meeting with every department and every level of staff. After meeting with the departments we will conduct an intensive review in which we:

- Re-evaluate how the department or program achieves it's stated goal
- Specify which departments or programs are producing results but are in need of improvement; specify which departments or programs are out of date and no longer serving a pressing need
- Identify work that is being done by multiple departments or programs in order to weed out duplication of work and eliminate waste

- Re-assess staffing levels based on needs and stated goals of department or program
- Determine the quality service to city residents
- Assess status of communication between department heads and staff as well as inter-departmental communication

Our findings will be presented to non-partisan citizen panel that I will appoint. The panel will be charged with recommending implementation of the savings we find. The citizen panel will both serve to keep our review open to the public and will help us bridge partisan divides so that we present a unified front on how we can save Norwalk tax dollars.

Oak Hills and OHPA

When it comes to the Oak Hills and OHPA, transparency is lacking. We need to make sure environmental safeguards are in order and that we keep the public apprised of what's going on. Obviously, Oak Hills has been troubled for some time. Transparency is critical to an open, honest government that keeps citizens' trust. As I outlined in my platform, my administration will seek constant dialogue with our city's residents and facilitate that dialogue by upgrading City Hall with 21st century communications, seizing on the opportunities the internet and new media provide us. Changes like these are long overdue.

Poko Development

A quick browse of POKO's website reveals other "stalled" projects that are moving slowly or going nowhere. It seems as if nothing outside of New York City is going forward. POKO has had years to get this project up and running. At every turn, it has shown an inability to make it work. Moreover, its program of overbuilding condos is passé and outdated. POKO has promised and over-promised. When I'm elected I will immediately seek to modify or pull the plug on this deal and seek a new request for a proposal for a more logical and reasonably sized complex. If POKO wants to bid for another round, it could, but it would be judged partly by its past results, or lack thereof. The Wall Street area is too important for the future of Norwalk to allow the continued stalling and waiting on developers who haven't delivered. Norwalk needs a Mayor who will vigorously lead projects to their completion. We lack that drive from our current administration.

Getting projects like these moving is critical to growing Norwalk's economy to provide middle and working class families the quality jobs and tax relief they so desperately need.