

**Mayoral Candidate Dan Knapik's answers to the citizens submitted  
through the Westfield Evening News.  
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**QUESTION 1**

What zoning revisions would you recommend to stimulate commercial and residential growth in the core district, while protecting the character of nearby residential neighborhoods from commercial sprawl?

**Answer:** The core district already has very broad zoning requirements that allow for a significant diversity in business uses and allows residential development. What we need to do is provide economic incentives to owners and developers to locate downtown. I would propose expansion of our ability to declare economic target areas to include the downtown. This would spur development like it has on the north side of town. I would also extend the same incentives to developers of residential properties.

The issue of zoning on Broad Street and Court Street and potential commercial expansion beyond those streets into the adjoining neighborhoods is more troubling. This is a tough issue in this area. The City needs to protect the scale and historic character of these neighborhoods with an eye toward how best to preserve these historic structures. There are many old houses on Broad and Court and the cost for a family to rehabilitate them is enormous. Additionally, the cost for a business to buy a building and rehab it with only a limitation for residential units on the upper floors to get a return on investment may also impede improvements. I lived it firsthand. I bought an old house a few blocks from downtown and over the last 10 years, I have invested a lot of money to bring it back and get it in good condition. You really have to love old houses to do that. In my case, it's a house my great grandfather built, and I am committed to staying there.

The city council is presently reviewing the zoning in this area again. If you have comments you would like to make, please attend a subcommittee meeting so that we can hear your concerns. I do not support further commercial encroachment into our neighborhoods.

**QUESTION 2**

The city has a need to increase its industrial tax base, but has a very limited Industrial A zone on the city's north side, where further development will exacerbate residential resistance. What can be done to mitigate residential resistance to the full and best use of existing industrial A zoned land and is there other property in the city which would be suitable for industrial development?

**Answer:** From the very beginning of my campaign, I have staked out a position on north side development that incorporates a new business model. This model calls for the siting of neighborhood friendly businesses, similar to the Agawam Industrial Park. The model we operate under today, was developed 30 years ago to attract big box warehousing to Westfield. Meanwhile, Chicopee, Springfield, Holyoke and Agawam were the premier locations for small manufacturing and service businesses. As mayor I won't support economic incentives for any future big box warehouse beyond the agreements we have in place today.

My opponent's position stated in the Boston Globe article September 8, 2009 entitled, **Retailers target Westfield as distribution hub** is "We would like to be more diversified in our industrial growth, but we welcome these new industries," Westfield Mayor Michael R. Boulanger said of the boom in distribution center construction.

I have proposed the siting and permitting of a new industrial park on city-owned property along Turnpike Industrial Way. My vision for this park would be to emulate the garden-style industrial park where I work on Silver Street in Agawam in that it is more compatible with its residential neighbors. The easy

sites have already been developed and our economic development team is going to need a new strategy focused on small-scale projects on scattered sites across town. But in order to attract these businesses, we need to aggressively market our assets to overcome our historic attractiveness to warehousing and not just accept any project that comes down the Pike. We need to be more discerning and more aggressive in selling ourselves to manufacturing and service-sector opportunities. Having been on the front lines of business development and marketing for 20 years, I'm ready for that challenge.

### **QUESTION 3**

What would be your spending and budget cut priorities in anticipation of further reductions in state local aid as well as Chapter 70 and special education funding. Would the fiscal pain be spread evenly throughout the city governmental structure, or would the largest departments, in terms of spending, bear the brunt of those cuts proportional to their budget?

**Answer:** I differ dramatically on the public position the mayor has taken on the 9c cuts that may come. He's talking about closing down buildings, cutting school and public safety funding, turning off street lights and employee furloughs. Having served on the city council for eight years I have the knowledge and experience as to how to finance our city properly. I am absolutely confident, upon my election, if the cut to local aid is made by the state, the city will be able to absorb that cut without impacting city employee jobs and essential services provided to our citizens. Our departments are already at minimum staffing levels. And some, like the fire department, which is short approximately 12 firefighters, cannot take any more. I will work with the city council, the school committee and school administration and the city's unions and department heads, to ensure that we fund our obligations.

The current Mayor missed an opportunity last spring. He failed to negotiate in good faith with the City's unions. I will engage union leaders not only during times of distress but I will work to create a healthy partnership where the Administration can learn from employees where things are working and where they are not. Labor relations require a deep commitment to collaboration from both parties and this Mayor has created a confrontational one-sided relationship with these unions over the past two years. The city council had provided him with ample warning (starting in the summer of 2008 with the creation of the ad hoc committee on budget preparedness) about the likely problems facing the FY 10 budget. With a decline in state revenue of \$3.5 million and over \$700,000 in lost excise tax revenue, we needed to enlist all the resources of the city to ensure that the budget would fund our obligations at appropriate levels.

My approach to potential cuts is to recommend to the city council that the available balance coming back to the city in free cash from the FY 2009 budget be allocated to any shortfall in funding. I expect that after liabilities are paid from the FY 09 budget that the mayor did not fully address last year, we will have available at least \$600,000. That should position us to absorb the majority of potential 9c cuts. If it's not enough, I am prepared to recommend to the city council that the remaining shortfall be drawn from the city's stabilization account.

The additional challenge for this budget is that it doesn't appropriately fund our expense liability for the rest of the year. I have been reviewing the budget and have identified a number of short funded accounts. Most notably, city overtime, snow and ice of at least \$700,000 and public works construction. Fortunately, the city council has reserved 1 million dollars from the budget that was made available due to the decline in our bond payments. I have already consulted with the city council finance chairman to put into consideration the use of this money to offset anticipated shortfalls. That coupled with \$3.4 million in our stabilization account should assure that we have enough money to fund our obligations to our employees and to our citizens.