2010 Candidate Questionnaire

Responses From:
- Willmar Mayor & City Council
- Willmar School Board
- Kandiyohi County Commissioner
- Kandiyohi County Attorney
- State House District 13
- State House District 13A
- State House District 13B
- State House District 18B
- New London Mayor & City Council
- New London School Board
- Spicer Mayor & City Council

September 2010
# Table of Contents

**Willmar Mayor Candidates** 3  
Les Heitke & Frank Yanish

**Willmar City Council Candidates** 4  
Bruce DeBlieck, Ron Christianson, Andy Bjur, Rick Fagerlie & Doug Reese

**Willmar School Board** 6  
Linda Mathiasen, Nathan Streed, Dan Croonquist, Jill Gould, Bill Fenske, Doug Thorpe & Shawn Mueske

**Kandiyohi County Commissioner Candidates** 9  
Richard Falk, Jim Butterfield, Dean Shuck, Doug Lindblad, Harlan Madsen & John Cunningham

**Kandiyohi County Attorney Candidates** 10  
Boyd Beccue & Jenna Fischer

**State House District 13** 12  
Joe Gimse & Larry Rice

**State House District 13A** 13  
Paul Anderson

**State House District 13B** 14  
Al Juhnke & Bruce Vogel

**State House District 18B** 14  
Dean Urdahl & Darrin Anderson

**Spicer Mayor** 15  
Denny Baker

**Spicer City Council Candidates** 15  
Troy Block & Shelly Munyon

**New London Mayor** 16  
Bill Gossman

**New London City Council Candidates** 16  
Chad Kluver, John Bergman, Kevin Dittbenner & Joel Packer

**New London School Board** 17  
Robert Moller, Holli Cogelow Ruter, Helena Lungstrom, Dan DeGeest & Todd Neumann
1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

Les Heitke – First, the City of Willmar needs to help with the creation of jobs for our citizens. Coordinating with MinnWest Technology Campus to recruit businesses, find and use grants for research and development business will provide higher paying bio-medical businesses and jobs for our community. Secondly, when Willmar receives the release of the land at the old airport from the State of Minnesota, we can seriously begin to develop a much needed industrial park to help our businesses to expand, develop more products and employ more citizens. Thirdly, Willmar must maintain a very close and conservative fiscal management of our financial resources. The State of Minnesota is presenting information now that indicates a $5-6 Billion Dollar state deficit over the next biennium. This will place enormous financial pressure on Willmar’s financial resources and the expected loss of more Local Government Aid. Willmar needs to maintain its strong bond rating, continue to coordinate with Kandiyohi County and the Willmar School District to coordinate and partner with shared costs for shared services and maintain a low City Tax Rate which it now has. Stability in our city finances, budgeting and the pressure to keep our City Tax Rate low is a priority.

Frank Yanish – Budget. Fix flooding problems, streets and train issues. Make downtown Willmar a clean, safe, attractive, non-threatening destination.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

Les Heitke – Maintaining a conservative fiscal management of Willmar’s fiscal resources is a very high priority. We do not know the fiscal impact of the State’s budget problems for the next biennium until we know the election results for our new Governor and the legislative discussion that will take place next winter and spring at the legislature. I do expect that Willmar is likely to receive another cut in Local Government Aid from the State of Minnesota. The City Council and myself as Mayor have asked our city staff to present budget scenarios that would include budget cuts of $500,000, $750,000 and $1,000,000 for the budget in 2011. Willmar now has a hiring freeze for all positions unless the City Council authorizes a specific position—i.e. sharing Police Liaison Officers with the City and School District, shared space and costs at the Law Enforcement Center, probable merger of the City and County Assessing services.

Frank Yanish – Budget, watch spending very carefully. There are far too many duplications in government services between the City and County and I feel that some of these services could be shared, thus saving us thousands of dollars.

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

Les Heitke – City government should provide essential and requested services from our citizens. Our recent community survey indicates that our citizens want essential services in public safety (police and fire protection) and crime prevention, public works projects and street repair and maintenance (Waste Water Treatment Plant, potholes, management of storm water runoff, timely snow removal) and parks, recreations and community education services (parks, arenas, ball fields, aquatic center, trails, noontime basketball for local business employees, community education classes and services). Secondly, government should provide open and accessible information for our citizens – absolute respect for the Open Meeting Law, televised government meetings when financially feasible, City website with schedules, minutes, city information about services and facilities, WRAC-8 services to provide information to our citizens. Thirdly, strong and conservative fiscal management of Willmar’s fiscal resources.

Frank Yanish – Very limited – government should play a role in providing the essential services that the citizens really need. I feel strongly that there should be more transparency in government and would like to see all committee meetings videotaped in the same manner as council meetings. This would give the public more knowledge of issues facing the City and what is being done to correct them. I also believe that every citizen should have the right to express their opinions in a dignified manner at all committee and council meetings.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Les Heitke – Our city needs to continue to partner with the MinnWest Technology Campus to recruit businesses, assist with grant and funding options for business relocations and job creation. We need to open up and provide infrastructure for our new expanded Industrial Park as soon as the State of Minnesota releases the land to the City of Willmar. We have contracts and businesses waiting to expand into this land. We will move quickly to open up this land once it is released to the City from the State of Minnesota. This will provide business expansion with business products and increased employment. I have worked hard to establish and maintain a low City Tax Rate – lowest among 24 regional cities in Minnesota. This provides a strong incentive for business relocations and expansions. Maintaining this low City Tax Rate is another of my high priorities. Lobbying for a new Veteran’s Nursing Home will continue. This 80 bed facility would provide many state funded jobs. I will continue to advocate for shared services and shared costs among the City of Willmar, Willmar School District and Kandiyohi County. This fall, I will be inviting the Mayors of the sixteen cities, towns and villages of Kandiyohi County to meet to discuss mutual concerns and possible fiscal solutions to services and city expenditures and supplies.

Frank Yanish – Continue working on creating a better business atmosphere within the City and work toward better transportation to and from the Twin Cities.
5) The Willmar City Administrator has indicated that he will be retiring in 2011. Who should be involved in the selection process to fill the position?

Les Heitke – It is likely that the City Council will use a professional recruiting firm to find, recruit and identify possible candidates for this position. Local employees will be invited to apply for this position and I expect that we will have regional, state and possible national interest in this position due to Willmar’s positive image on a regional, state and national level. I have always relied on the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce to provide resource persons from its membership for city committees, task forces and to provide information to its own membership and the public at large and the Chamber has always responded strongly. Once the candidate list for City Administrator has been established, I would invite the Chamber to provide a representative to participate in the interview and evaluation process for this vital position for our city. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Frank Yanish – City Council, Mayor and a specially appointed advisory committee.

Willmar City Council Candidates

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

Bruce DeBlieck (Ward 1) - 1) The City is facing ever decreasing local government aids LGA, With the state legislative budget gap we need to plan for and expect reductions in LGA the exact amount of cuts is unknown, due to the uncertainty from further legislative action funding cuts in 2011 and 2012, the legislature will be looking at proposal for closing the state’s budget gap, cuts to property tax aids and credits are likely to be in their plans. 2) As the City grows, street construction and reconstruction, street lighting, seal coats and other street-related projects. These projects are ever increasing in costs and street reconstruction dollars are becoming more difficult to fund. 3) Willmar remains the eighth largest city in Greater Minnesota. The State Demographer expects growth to continue in the future, with the population projected to increase 3.5% from 2010 to 2020. The age groups expected to show the most growth in the near future are the “baby boomers” (age 55+) and those persons age 5-14 and 35-44. The community is also becoming more multicultural, we need to promote inclusiveness, and economic growth.

Ron Christianson (Ward 2) – 1) Funding future budgets for the City of Willmar. 2) Providing the necessary governmental services to residents and businesses in Willmar at the lowest cost possible. This includes keeping our streets in good repair and solving our storm water problems. 3) More openness in government in general.

Andy Bjur (Ward 2) – 1) Storm water management. 2) Promote economic growth. 3) Expand recreational opportunities.

Rick Fagerlie (Ward 3) – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

Doug Reese (Ward 4) – 1) With the recession, the state of the economy and the cuts in funding to local taxing jurisdictions the economic future of the region is of great concern. 2) Our rural communities have changed significantly and will continue to change. The small towns are fighting a battle of survival. All communities in the region are looking for more engagement from the community’s residents. The concern here is the rural community’s (or region’s) ability to survive, maintain some sort of vitality and growth. 3) A large percentage of the region’s population is nearing retirement. For the region to grow economic development is key. How do we attract and retain the younger well educated, trained and talented worker that is key to both economic sustainability and economic development?

2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

Bruce DeBlieck (Ward 1) – We need to make the difficult but right choices when it comes to managing budget deficits that resulted from state aid un-allotment. We have been cutting services, reducing workforce, use of reserve funds, and making modest increases in local property taxes. None of these decisions have been easy or popular, but this balanced approach is necessary in order to keep City’s budget balanced.

Ron Christianson (Ward 2) – Funding future budgets for the City of Willmar. Willmar’s share of LGA (Local Government Aid from the State) has been cut for the last three years (2010’s cut was over $600,000 and we didn’t reduce any services). LGA currently makes up about 26% of Willmar’s budget. Due to the States Budget Deficit, we should plan for another LGA cut in 2011 and continue to look for more efficiency in all departments of our city including staffing levels as retirements come about in the next few years. We also need to determine if reserves should be used for budget funding due to the state of the economy. The clear cut solution for funding future budgets is increased economic activity at all levels and a broader tax base. We should work to encourage both of these.

Andy Bjur (Ward 2) – Storm water management is one of the Cities priority concerns that is also one of the State of Minnesota concerns. Dealing with storm water is a multi stage task, and a series of many solutions will be needed. Historically the Willmar area was built on wet land soils and there is very little elevation change from the south edge of Willmar to the closest lake. Part of the solution is to start with the parking and landscaping ordinances. These ordinances will need to be reviewed for the ability to reduce hard-scaped paved surfaces to the minimal amount needed for each use. The less paved surfaces installed means the less water is funneled into the storm sewer. Also sump pumps should be reviewed to be allowed to discharge into French drains or other garden areas. This would allow home owners to protect their basements during peak rains. Capital improvement to create more regional ponds or detainage areas will need to be looked at, but they should also be landscaped with fountains or native plants to make them attractive and assets to the community.

Rick Fagerlie (Ward 3) – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

Doug Reese (Ward 4) – Addressing #1. Changes and/or reductions in services and programs offered by school districts, cities and counties will be unavoidable. According to the League of Minnesota Cities no cities will avoid steep budget cuts. Minneapolis and St. Paul being the largest cities in the state will face the largest deficits as a percent of their
3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Bruce DeBlieck (Ward 1)** - The City role is to provide basic services like police and fire protection within the community for the protection of both people and property. Keeping roads in good repair and clear of ice and snow. Provide for all residents and ensure there is clean water and sewer. Some other items that are a measure of good community services are services such a library and good parks, ultimately it is residents of the community that set the role of government.

**Ron Christianson (Ward 2)** - The number one priority of government in our community should be to treat the taxpayer’s money as if it were the taxpayer’s money. The role of government today is the same as it was 100 years ago to provide those services necessary to residents and businesses and then get out of the way of the private sector. Those necessary services include police and fire protection, sewer and water, well maintained streets, sidewalks and paths, and in Willmar’s case a well managed Regional Hospital and Electric Utility. These services can be delivered by City Employees and/or private sector service companies, whichever is more cost efficient.

**Andy Bjur (Ward 2)** - Government is to provide leadership on new and existing policy decisions that are for the greater good of the City.

**Rick Fagerlie (Ward 3)** - [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

**Doug Reese (Ward 4)** - City governments serve the residents by providing police and fire protection, street maintenance, water and sewer service and any other necessary public works needs. Necessary may be a key word as the City Council grapples with the budget and the rethinking of City services.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

**Bruce DeBlieck (Ward 1)** - Looking at the big picture, it would have to be said that the local economy is fairing pretty well in the current economy. Business activity and employment remains strong, even with the drop in construction activity. MinnWest Technology Campus remains a bright spot in the area economy. There are currently 19, businesses operating at the Campus with more than 240 employees. A joint effort with Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, MinnWest, University of Minnesota, MNSCU the City for a building on the Campus that will house the Research and Outreach Center. Bio-tech development this should be an increasingly important piece of the local economy. Willmar is developing the former airport site into new industrial park, the final plat for the expanded industrial park has been approved. The City is obtaining the land release for the former airport from the FAA once the completed this land will become available for industrial use.

**Ron Christianson (Ward 2)** - Continue supporting the Economic Development Commission and all of its efforts in retaining current businesses and inviting new businesses to settle in our community. Creating an environment friendly to businesses is the best thing government can do. Job creation comes from the private sector and NOT government. The City Council needs to review all policies that pertain to businesses - then eliminate those that aren’t necessary and update the remaining policies. Promote and improve the new airport and industrial park expansion. Keep transportation issue on the front burner - Hwy 23 corridor and improvement to Hwy 12 East. Continue to recognize that Agriculture has a large impact on our local economy and do all we can to continue its presence on the boards and committees of the Economic Development Commission.

**Andy Bjur (Ward 2)** - #1 Provide incentives for new development in designated priority areas like the new industrial park or the central business district. #2 Provide incentives for businesses to connect to the City’s district heating system. It is likely the more businesses attached to this underused resource would help reduce energy costs on the whole as well as produce more revenue for the City instead of non local energy sources. #3 The promotion of area recreational and regional community assets will attract more young professionals to our community. #4 Hire local whenever possible.

**Rick Fagerlie (Ward 3)** - [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

**Doug Reese (Ward 4)** - Continued support for the Kandiyohi and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission. Priority given to the development of the west railroad bypass and rail expansion to the industrial park and airport. Work with MinnWest Technology to attract companies to locate or relocate their businesses to the MinnWest Campus in Willmar.

5) The Willmar City Administrator has indicated that he will be retiring in 2011. Who should be involved in the selection process to fill the position?

**Bruce DeBlieck (Ward 1)** - The Willmar City Administrator will be retiring in 2011, the administrator position is the only employee of the city that reports directly to and is responsibility to the City Council, therefore the selection process to fill this position is the responsibility of the Mayor and City Council to review candidates and fill the position.

**Ron Christianson (Ward 2)** - Four city council persons, the mayor and two or three other residents of the city.

**Andy Bjur (Ward 2)** - I believe it should be the policy of the City of Willmar to have the City Council set policy and hire a city administrator to follow through on that policy. Other staff should be accountable to the City Administrator and be hired by the City Administrator. It is not the role of a city council to micro-manage how City policy is achieved.

**Rick Fagerlie (Ward 3)** - [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

**Doug Reese (Ward 4)** - The City of Willmar is very fortunate that current City Administrator, Michael Schmit, is giving a one-year notice. I would rather be in the situation of having the current administrator in position while searching for a replacement for that position. I feel that the City Council should follow a similar process utilized by Rice Hospital to find a new CEO. The City Council should utilize the services of a search firm which will ultimately come to the City Council with recommendations and then the City Council will make the final decision to hire. The City Administrator serves as the
1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our schools that need to be addressed?

Linda Mathiasen – 1) Funding – Current system is broken; 2) Expenses & Efficiency – Needs to be evaluated by return on investments (ROI) and long-term viability; 3) School Effectiveness – A safe and productive learning environment for all children while achieving a positive, high quality work environment conducive to professional and personal satisfaction.

Nathan Streed – a) To continue to offer the necessary educational opportunities within our budget. b) To fast track the work that has begun in working with the other districts on cooperative agreements of shared administrative services. c) To increase the overall understanding of the education system so that we can begin to work locally on changes that need to be made on a state and national level which will intern benefit our local district.

Dan Croonquist – Increasing achievement for ALL students while also closing the achievement gap. Maintaining quality offerings and a quality education in a volatile economy. Making sure our students are prepared to be involved and contributing citizens.

Jill Gould – A) Ensuring educational excellence. We know every child, regardless of poverty and tenuous home-lives, can learn to read, write and do math at respectable levels. There is proof of this success in districts across the nation who are succeeding in spite of these challenges. I believe the key to this lies squarely on teachers’ shoulders. Teachers matter more than anything else in the success or failure of our children’s ability to learn. Teachers need to be supported and valued as professionals, and they need current curriculum, training to keep them current with today’s teaching methodologies. Teachers also need to know how to best respond to students’ ethnicity, culture, ability levels, and multiple languages spoken and the very real challenges of poverty and violence that so many of our district’s children face. Like any profession, teachers also need to be accountable for the product they produce. Not even one child should fall victim to an underperforming teacher who holds that child’s future, and by extension our future, in his or her hands. I believe in setting performance feedback and expectations, which are measured based on a variety of protocols to ensure a fair and accurate assessment of performance involving peers, administrators and parents. B) Financial solvency. State funding for Minnesota schools has increased an average of 1.1% annually since 2003-04, which does not allow our district to keep up with inflation. To their credit, our school board and administrators have acted responsibly and have successfully kept our district out of statutory operating debt (SOD), and maintained a fund balance by cutting 7 million dollars from the district budget over the past six years, while keeping 78.8% of expenses going to instruction, i.e., the students. However, these cuts froze curriculum development and technology and textbook purchases. The cuts also gutted core programs in science, communications, social sciences, ELL and special education. A quarter of the music staff is gone, with parents and students holding carwash fundraisers just to pay salaries. French has been cut, and the presence of Chinese depends on a temporary grant. Advanced Placement chemistry was cut until a local Foundation paid for one semester of the class. Our classes are all bulging at the seams. The state of Minnesota recommends that kindergarten classes stay at 18, but the Kennedy Elementary average this fall is 23. Sixty-seven full time positions have been carved from an already lean staff. And now, our district faces the very real possibility of having to cut another 3.5 million dollars by 2012-13 and face projected SOD by 2015 unless funding can be increased. Our current board is asking voters to approve a local levy in order to keep these cuts at bay, to avoid SOD and to maintain a fund-balance. I support and will vote in favor of this levy on the November ballot and am part of a volunteer citizen group called Education Matters speaking as an advocate for the levy. I believe it is the responsibility of a school board to plan, not only for the coming school year, but how to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars today and into the future. Ten percent of our funding comes from local levy dollars; these dollars are not paying for extras in our schools, they are paying to keep the buildings lit and heated. Education decisions are made on a local level. Parents, community members, local leaders and the public contribute to the success or failure of a district and the vitality it can bring to a community. C) Building Bridges. It is vital for the continued and future success of our community to have a school district that provides an excellent education, produces contributing citizens, and because of its educational opportunities, helps draw employers and employees to our region. If we want a growing, vibrant economy, our educational institutions must be stellar.

Bill Fenske – a) Curriculum offerings including depth and breadth of offerings; b) State and local funding including unfunded mandates; c) Declining enrollment.

Don Thorpe – 1) All Students Education (not no student left behind) but All Students Moving Forward; 2) Secure and pleasant place to work for staff and students; 3) Reduce (eliminate) Property taxes. Outrages fees (Parking $100, Sports $300). State and National has to become responsible again fully funding schools (the countries future).

Shawn Mueske – In my opinion, the top three priorities of the Willmar Public School district include improving student achievement, immediate and long term financial stability of the district, and enhancing communication with all stakeholders.

2) What do you think are the primary functions of a School Board member?

Linda Mathiasen – Provide Leadership – Accountable to the Public; Communication – Approachable, eager to hear opinions and share information, actively seek input; Policy development and oversight – Assert self as necessary to provide a quality and accessible education.

Nathan Streed – First to be the link between the district stakeholders and the school and secondly to be the policy makers for our school to operate under.

Dan Croonquist – School board members should focus on governance and not try to micromanage the school district. School board members set policies that allow administrators to manage, teachers to teach, and students to learn.
They are also charged with the responsibility of evaluating the superintendent and helping him or her to be successful. In addition, it is the duty of the school board to make sure that tax dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. Finally, school board members need to serve as ambassadors for the school district and reach out to the community to seek input and feedback from the citizens.

**Jill Gould** – I believe the primary function of a school board member is to ensure academic excellence for all students; we cannot afford to fail a single student. To that end, I believe a board guided by academics first needs to set goals, make policies, and engage with stakeholders to ensure the district can thrive. Specifically, I believe board functions can include the following: ensure a safe and healthy environment for students and staff, work with community partners to enhance educational opportunities, advocate for students with state law makers, evaluate and hire a superintendent, develop a long-term vision for the district with policies to ensure that vision, ratify district employee contracts, attend school board member training, and ensure the district is a good steward of tax dollars.

**Bill Fenske** -- a) Oversight of the public school systems representing the community and its taxpayers; b) Ensure baseline academic achievement is provided to all students of the district; c) Ensure advanced learning opportunities are available to students.

**Don Thorpe** — Final responsibility of schools action. To pressure state and national to support schools again. Keep administration, staff, parents, and students community in check.

**Shawn Mueske** – A school board member is elected to develop and manage district policies and supervise the Superintendent of Schools. A good school board member should continuously listen to the input of stakeholders and be well informed enough to ask tough questions. During my five years serving on the Willmar School Board, I always had my ears open to the concerns of the district’s stakeholders and participated in several educational opportunities to become a more effective board member. I would continue these efforts if fortunate enough to be elected.

3) What expectations do you have of students graduating from high school? What does a high school diploma mean to you?

**Linda Mathiasen** - A HS diploma is a child’s most defining achievement and a determinant of lifelong success. It should be a reflection of academic strengths, character and interest through responsive curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs.

**Nathan Streed** – A diploma means that you have met the minimum educational requirements by law. My expectation is that they not only meet the minimum requirements but to have surpassed those requirements.

**Dan Croonquist** – Students earning a high school diploma should have the necessary knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills to be prepared to enter post secondary education or begin a career. A high school diploma is one step of many that is needed in order for our young people to become productive members of society.

**Jill Gould** – In the past year, I attended a panel at Ridgewater College where current students stated that, their K-12 education had not prepared them adequately in math, and they needed to take a remedial “catch-up” class. Whether the students graduated from WPS or elsewhere, the greater point remains that our K-12 system needs to ensure adequate academic rigor. My expectations are that a high school diploma from Willmar Public Schools minimally allows that any students who aspire to continue their education have the tools and the preparation they need to step up to the college challenge without remedial “catch-up” classes and, in fact, provides them with the academic rigor to successfully achieve admission to an Ivy League college if desired. And for those students who determine not to go on to further education, a diploma means they have the tools needed to step in up to employment, becoming productive members in our communities. In the past five years, I have volunteered my time with an organization called Junior Achievement (JA) in the Willmar School district. JA is dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy. Each year, I emphasize the importance of staying in school, of obtaining a diploma, and sometimes I bring my high school diploma to show them when I hand them their certificates of completion for the JA program. Each time, I ask the students what that high school diploma will get them. The students, even at an elementary level answer with, “a job”, or “I will get to go to college.” The answer is simple, and one that even the smallest learner understands: a high school diploma to show them when I hand them their certificates of completion for the JA program. Each time, I ask the students what that high school diploma will get them. The students, even at an elementary level answer with, “a job”, or “I will get to go to college.” The answer is simple, and one that even the smallest learner understands: a high school diploma is the gateway to your next step, the next chapter of your life.

**Bill Fenske** – Base line academic achievement, working cooperatively, and living with values of honesty, respect, and hard work.

**Don Thorpe** — Students should do their best. They should not only have skills to survive but also confidence to be out in society and keep their dreams alive. (Society can be a dream killer)

**Shawn Mueske** – A graduate of the WPS system should possess the capability to succeed in any post-secondary college, university, and/or branch of the military, regardless of the nature of their continued studies/training. If a WPS graduate does not seek higher education, they should have the basic skills and aptitude to secure immediate employment and be successful. A sound education is an asset that can never be taken away and every graduate deserves one.

4) Would you support the development of pay for performance model for your district?

**Linda Mathiasen** – Yes. Teachers deserve to be compensated on the investment and commitment they bring to their classroom. This will help ensure good teachers remain in the classroom.

**Nathan Streed** – Pay for performance – Absolutely. I think everyone would like to be paid for their performance; however, there are a lot of variables to base that performance and it should not be strictly based on testing and test scores and who is going to set those standards. The challenge for pay for performance is, “Where is the money going to come from to pay it?”

**Dan Croonquist** – Yes, as long as it is developed collaboratively with teachers, administrators, school board members, and other stakeholders to ensure that it is implemented in an equitable and effective manner.

**Jill Gould** – Yes, I would support our teachers in their development of a model for consideration. Pay-for-performance, merit pay, alternative pay or Q-Comp, is a collaborative plan, with teacher unions and administrators...
working together, with the primary model being teacher-driven. The goal of pay-for-performance et.al is to improve all teacher outcomes, it may be in the form of mentorship’s to work with low-performing teachers or to financially reward teachers based on measurable outcomes, which would be developed and agreed upon between unions and administrators. My only concern is how such a program might be funded. After the Minnesota Department of Education approves a plan developed by teachers and administrators in a district, the school district is allocated some, but not all funding for the program or incentive; the remainder is left to local taxpayers. In a climate where we are already asking voters for dollars to keep basic educational offerings intact, it would take careful consideration to determine if such a program would serve our district well now.

**Bill Fenske** – Yes, but under specific criteria developed and agreed to by the school board, administration, and faculty. Additional funding must be included from federal, state, and local sources.

**Don Thorpe** – NO! Teacher methods and performance, failure and success are not truly measurable. Cannot be done fairly.

**Shawn Mueske** – I fully support the concept of the pay for performance model. However, the criteria for determining performance must clearly be an indicator of actual teacher performance. There are many variables that determine the success or failure of a student and some of these variables can be attributed to the teacher, but several cannot. Continual teacher development, curriculum review processes, and after school/community activities certainly need to be considered in any performance formula. I am very interested in the development of an evaluation tool that could truly measure performance.

5) Do you support for alternative teacher licensure?

**Linda Mathiasen** – Yes. Criteria should be flexible to meet demand while ensuring knowledgeable, student-centered teachers are in the classroom.

**Nathan Streed** – I think alternative teaching licensure is something that may be applicable for certain subjects for students in 9th-12th grades. One of the challenges though is that there would have to be standards for those individuals to teach our students and who will decide those standards.

**Dan Croonquist** – I would be open to the possibility of alternative teacher licensure, especially if there were to be a shortage of teachers in our district. I would expect such a process to be rigorous in order to ensure high quality teachers in the classroom.

**Jill Gould** – Because of the curriculum and equipment purchasing freeze, a high school biology class will wait seven years for current equipment, software and textbooks, lacking adequate probe-wear and using thermometers decades old. Therefore, would I support a community expert, such as one of the science and technology professionals at the Minn West Campus coming into that classroom to share current, real-world applications with students? Absolutely, it is time to stop using tradition to set educational policy. Community experts, who have passed background checks and have proven themselves to be effective, using teaching methods appropriate for children with performance measures, should be considered to complement and enhance academic offerings.

**Bill Fenske** – Yes, under certain circumstances. It may be appropriate in order to meet or expand educational offerings and curriculum. Licensure and training must be developed to ensure that the quality of education remains at current levels.

**Don Thorpe** – NO! Professional license is for reason. Examples: Should we have alternative Law license or alternative medical doctor short cuts to get a license

**Shawn Mueske** – Alternative teacher licensure is an issue that warrants investigation. The issue of competency in a classroom involves a complex combination of skills. Currently, an academic credential is sufficient to demonstrate that competency. I do not believe the credential guarantees a successful career in teaching. Again, an evaluation tool that could truly measure teacher performance could also be used to place teachers in the classroom regardless of a specific academic credential.

6) What is your position regarding four (4) day school weeks?

**Linda Mathiasen** – I am opposed to a four-day school week in Willmar. The long-term educational impact is yet to be determined. It would also change our community: More children without adult supervision, MS children who are most likely to make poor choices would have more opportunity; HS students would possibly work more, impacting school success and taking jobs away from adults.

**Nathan Streed** – I personally don’t feel that a four day school week is in the best interest for districts our size. What would the absentee rate of employees in our community be on Monday’s or whatever day there is no school? What will those students be doing when their parents are at work? We already have many students and children unattended before and after school because of their parents work schedule, I don’t think we need more. With the number of people coming into Willmar on any given weekday for work, appointments, shopping, etc., do we really want to have an additional 900 plus students (10th-12th grade) driving around town, even half of that would be a lot?

**Dan Croonquist** – I would be open to looking into four (4) day school weeks should circumstances in our school district dictate such consideration. I would want to explore the effect such a schedule would have on student achievement, as well as how it would affect teachers, parents, employers, child care, extra-curricular activities and other stake holders in our community.

**Jill Gould** – I do not support a four-day school week.

**Bill Fenske** – I am not in favor of four (4) day school weeks under the current financial situation.

**Don Thorpe** – Keep at 5 day / week.

**Shawn Mueske** – There are several school districts that are moving to a four day school week simply to save costs. I believe that is not the correct motivation for implementing that type of change. Maintaining and/or improving student achievement needs to be central in any discussion about changing the delivery system of the curriculum. I would not support using the WPS in the 4 day school week as an experiment. I prefer the “wait and see” approach to this idea. If
student achievement is not negatively impacted by those districts currently using the 4 day school week (or if achievement actually increases), I would be interested in exploring the option. If student achievement falters in those districts currently using the 4 day week, I would not explore the option. The education of our children is too important.

**Kandiyohi County Commissioner Candidates**

1) **What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?**

- **Richard Falk (District 1)** – 1) We need to continue to prioritize our County’s programs, line by line, as we look at ways to reduce spending. 2) Redesigning state and local government can save millions of dollars. 3) School funding, it affects everything.

- **Jim Butterfield (District 1)** – 1) Spending and funding. 2) Public safety. 3) Welfare fraud.

- **Dean Shuck (District 3)** – 1) County and city government as well as economic development commissions need to work together to bring new business to our region that provides at least a livable wage. 2) We must work cooperatively to retain/expand business presently in the Willmar Lakes Area. 3) Promote and market Kandiyohi County as a community with excellent quality of life: good primary and secondary schools, postsecondary learning opportunities at Ridgewater College, high quality and accessible health care with ACMC, Family Practice and a number of private specialty practices along with holistic and chiropractic health care choices, strong arts and cultural events in the community ie. Barn Theatre, "Little Theatre" Arts in the Park, Becker Market, as well as annual community events to showcase their communities: —to name a few— Willmar Fests; Syttende Mai in Sunburg, Water Days in New London, Fun Days in Pennock and other lakes and tourism opportunities.

- **Doug Lindblad (District 3)** – Budget, Listen to voters, Land Fill.

- **Harlan Madsen (District 5)** – 1) Budget; state budget deficits have affected all local budgets. The cost shifts from state to local government, coupled with more state mandates have created serious challenges for local officials, businesses, schools, medical facilities, etc. This coupled with the worldwide economic situation has seriously affected local budgets. Providing the maximum value to the taxpayer in Kandiyohi County is a priority. 2) Demographic changes; the major demographic changes in our state (an aging population, a declining rural workforce, and reduction in the school age census) are creating both challenges and opportunities for our communities. It is important to identify where our strengths are and act appropriately. 3) Economic Development; business retention and development initiatives resulting in job growth in both rural areas and municipalities is vital to our communities’ well-being. The new economy and the new normal will provide some good opportunities, however, we need the full broadband technology to be more competitive.

- **John Cunningham (District 5)** – 1) Old business. 2) New business. 3) Dealing with the State. Leg. Gov.

2) **Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?**

- **Richard Falk (District 1)** – Kandiyohi County is a leader in finding new ways to make government work. We need to get our State on board.

- **Jim Butterfield (District 1)** – Welfare fraud. Since I filed to run for County Commission in District 1, welfare fraud has been brought up consistently when hearing from people. Welfare fraud literally steals from everyone in Kandiyohi County...tax payers, honest and deserving recipients, workers, families, everyone!!! There are several things we can do in order to stop this theft from the above mentioned of Kandiyohi County, including but not limited to: Implement a Welfare Fraud Hotline. Allocate case workers to investigate possible violations. Ask for stiffer penalties for committing fraud. If convicted of welfare fraud, make it very difficult to receive assistance in the future. Require annual re-application and re-certification, which includes the verification of dependents, work status, income and assets of recipients before the continuation of benefits is approved.

- **Dean Shuck (District 3)** – In order to encourage business growth we need to keep taxes down by cooperating with county and city governments, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber, and economic development commission to ensure a climate to increase business opportunities. Presently Kandiyohi County is partnering with cities and neighboring counties to provide government services at a cost savings. County government also works with the Association for Minnesota Counties, the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber, city governments and economic development commissions to combine our efforts to be heard by our state and federal government officials to be rid of unfunded mandates that hinder/hurt and account for use of limited local dollars.

- **Doug Lindblad (District 3)** – Possibility of consolidation of services

- **Harlan Madsen (District 5)** – There are many components of a solution to the budget challenge. The state must reduce, suspend or eliminate the mandates and bureaucracy that interfere with the ability of local officials to be flexible and make decisions based on local needs and priorities. We must make common sense decisions to redesign how services at the local level are delivered without driving up local costs. I will support more technology and more cost-efficient partnerships (especially public and private) to gain efficiency and still serve our citizens. I will continue to participate in the evaluation of all county functions to assess where reductions can be made without being “penny wise and pound foolish”. Reduced mandates, partnering, evaluating, redesigning and prioritizing will lead to a positive solution.

- **John Cunningham (District 5)** – We as rural leaders need to band together with other rural leaders to protect our business from government intrusion and mandates. To let them know outstate Minnesota matters for our roads, schools and business as well.

3) **What should the role of government be in our community?**

- **Richard Falk (District 1)** – The first role of county government is public safety. By that I mean Law Enforcement and safe roads. Second is helping those who can’t completely care for themselves.
John Cunningham (District 5) - Local control is preached maybe now we can start to see it as it should be.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Richard Falk (District 1) - I believe most economic development and job creation is done by our existing businesses. I support all the programs of our Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC). They have all the tools and do a wonderful job.

Jim Butterfield (District 1) - The exploration and development of programs and incentives to attract new industry to the area. There should also be a high priority placed on similar programs to invigorate and encourage our existing small businesses. Promote agriculture.

Dean Shuck (District 3) - 1) As county commissioner I feel it is critical to keep taxes as low as possible to ensure economic and business growth and still provide essential services. 2) Work in partnership to develop broadband access for all areas of the county as another means of providing business, education and citizens with increased opportunities for growth. 3) Continue to promote the strengths of Kandiyohi County to encourage business growth in the county.

Doug Lindblad (District 3) - Buy Local.

Harlan Madsen (District 5) - We need to have a wide variety of tools available to promote economic development in both our rural and urban areas. Every situation is unique and may require many different options ranging from work force inventory and development, comprehensive funding packages, infrastructure availability, potential sites for development, etc. We need to build a database and inventory, and then aggressively market our area and the assets we possess. I support open communication between all parties involved in economic development so that trustworthy, productive relationships are developed.

John Cunningham (District 5) - We kill a lot of progress with permit fees. Try and limit these costs so we can promote our county as business friendly.

Kandiyohi County Attorney Candidates

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our County that needs to be addressed by the County Attorney’s office?

Boyd Becue - 1) We need to find further efficiencies through technology and personnel management to deal with the continuing fiscal crisis. It is clear that regardless of which party controls the legislature or governor’s office, the state will be forced to further restrict expenditures for the criminal justice system as a whole. Tighter budgets for the state court system and Office of the State Public Defender mean that the County Attorney must look for ways to assist our system partners. Two examples of recent initiatives will illustrate. We have already begun to use eCharging, which results in significant savings to the court system and BCA by allowing our computer data to flow directly to their systems without further data entry requirements. In turn, we already receive most police reports digitally, eliminating the need for hand or mail delivery or reports. I have also placed greater emphasis on scheduling flexibility, having the assistants cover each other’s cases when possible, to assist scheduling by the court system and the public defender. 2) Despite the stress within the criminal justice system due to tight budgets, we must also accommodate increased civil case loads from county departments. Using one illustration, Kandiyohi County has just begun the process of re-determining benefits on our county ditches. This project will continue for several years and result in a much higher case load in ditch matters. I have held meetings with our ditch inspector, the chief viewer and the effected commissioners to find ways to streamline the process by setting realistic goals for viewer reports and hearings, and having advance discussion of key elements, such as grass ditch buffers, so that the landowners will have a clear understanding of the county action, which in turn should reduce the number of contested assessments and shorten the required hearings. 3) The county attorney must work closely with the Minnesota County Attorneys Association to increase collaboration between counties. For example, when a case must be referred out of the office due to a potential conflict of interest hiring special counsel can be extremely expensive. To avoid this expense, I have developed an understanding with Stearns County which permits the two counties to cover conflicts for each other without expense for outside attorneys. This allows the county to resolve conflicts and to maintain anticipated staff case loads, all without additional taxpayer cost.
2) What should the primary role of County Attorney be in our Community?

Boyd Beccue – The County Attorney is a Minister of Justice within the Criminal Justice System. This obligation has been stated by the Minnesota Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals on many occasions. It means that charging decisions and the prosecution of criminal cases must be accomplished with the primary goal of doing justice, for the State of Minnesota, the Defendant and Crime victims. I have always tried to adhere to this standard and have followed the prosecution guidelines of the National District Attorneys Association, which provide excellent guidance. In simple terms this role requires that the prosecutor must base all decisions on a clear understanding of the applicable law and facts, without fear or favor to anyone. Charging and prosecution decisions must never be made with an eye on public opinion or what might be “popular” at the moment. The county attorney must do what he honestly believes to be right, regardless of criticism. The other role of the County Attorney is to be chief counsel for the county board and departments. While this largely resembles the role of chief corporate counsel in the private sector, there is a big difference. As an elected officer the county attorney is responsible to the people and the Constitution, and if necessary must advise county departments that a contemplated action is contrary to law. A common instance involves the Open Meeting Law. In the past I have had to advise county personnel that a meeting they wished to have behind closed doors was required to be public. That advice may not be popular, but my obligation is to the law.

Jenna Fischer – The County Attorney is the Chief Prosecutor of crimes in our county. As an assistant county attorney for nearly five years, I prosecuted all categories of crime. I’ve also spent the last 10 years as a defense and family law attorney which taught me how to look at cases from all angles. Also, the County Attorney is the chief legal advisor to the County Board and agency heads. I’ve spent many years serving on the boards of local non-profits, including the Kandiyohi County Area Family YMCA, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce and Rice Memorial Hospital. I am well prepared to assist our Commissioners with the county’s legal issues.

3) In a time of shrinking court budgets, what changes do you foresee in how we might prosecute or charge out crimes which would not affect public safety?

Boyd Beccue – This process has already begun with the expansion of the list of “payable” tickets established by the Minnesota Judicial Council, the governing body of the court system. Under authority granted to the Judicial Council by the Legislature the “payable” list includes many offenses which previously required a court appearance but now may be handled by mailing in a check for the fine, without any possibility of other punishment. While this has already resulted in a reduced misdemeanor caseload, my concern is with the last part of the question: “public safety”. As an example, tickets for not having required automobile “No Fault” insurance are now “payable”, even for subsequent offenses. I and many other prosecutors feel that this will result in some individuals making a decision to simply not have insurance because it will be cheaper to pay two or three tickets over the course of a year – if they are caught! Since they face no further penalty for additional “no insurance” tickets, this decision is rational, to them, on a cost basis. However, it clearly does not improve the safety and financial well being of people who they might injure in a collision with an uninsured driver. I will continue to urge our legislators to remove certain offenses from the payable list if I believe the designation does not serve public safety.

Jenna Fischer – We simply can’t reduce budget when it comes to the prosecution of violent crime. However, if there is a policy consistency and even-handedness in charging, then we should begin to see economies in the system. Inconsistency and unfairness in charging brings out the most aggressive qualities in defense attorneys which costs our county significant tax dollars. Delays in justice cost money and I would institute a no-continuance policy. Once a trial date is set to everyone’s calendars, then the County Attorney will aggressively pursue swift justice and will object to requests for continuances. Better communication with other county and city agencies can result in cost savings to our County. The County Attorney must be willing to set ego aside and work with other elected and non-elected officials to eliminate duplication of services and to find solutions to problems that our agencies share.

4) In what ways could the business community partner with the County Attorney’s office in a coalition to reduce criminal activity?

Boyd Beccue – In the mid 1990s the Chamber sponsored a presentation by the Blandin Foundation which led to the formation of the group “Kandiyohi County Working Together”, which is still active today. Chamber sponsorship brought a large group of citizens, county and city personnel and justice system stake holders together at a time when our community faced increasing gang violence and juvenile crime. I have been a part of “Working Together” from the start and have seen positive action which flowed from that initial seminar. One example is “Circle Sentencing” for juveniles. Today Kandiyohi County Juvenile Court has Circle as an option for juvenile offenders. While the most serious offenders may not be accepted for Circle by the Court, many juveniles who have participated in Circle have benefited from contact with the concerned citizens in the circle and have turned to a productive lifestyle. A current area of concern, however, is reluctance by some in the business community to seek restitution from offenders when they are found guilty. Our Victim
2) Choosing one of the items listed above, what is your solution?

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

**Joe Gimse** - 1. Job creation and retentions is the most important priority for our region, our state and our nation. All levels of government must focus on three jobs creating objectives, reducing regulations and mandates, controlling business/employment related taxes and streamlining governmental permitting processes. 2. Water quality and control issues are extremely important to our region of the state. Controlling aquatic invasive plants in our lakes, better management of our storm water runoff and watershed nutrient loading will enhance our lakes and increase our appeal as a vibrant regional center. 3. Providing essential public services in an efficient and cost effective manner. In these difficult economic times all level of government will be required to evaluate every program it delivers. Government leaders must be prepared to make tough decisions while not creating an additional burden on our families and small businesses.

**Larry Rice** - First of all we need to focus on job creation. This will require reasonable tax policies, prudent investments in infrastructure, and an attitude that encourages business and agriculture growth. Secondly, the future of economy and our culture depends on quality educational opportunities, a key factor for decades in the success of our region and our state. Finally, we must have affordable and accessible health and elder care for our people.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above, what is your solution?

**Joe Gimse** - As a State Senator I have and will continue to offer solutions that fit all three of the priorities in one way or another. First, I will be a continue to work for streamlined state government agencies and programs. State government must eliminate duplicative permitting processes and overlapping agency duties and responsibilities. Just as our small businesses have done, government must reduce top heavy administrative and management functions that contribute little or nothing to the delivery of programs and services.

**Larry Rice** - On jobs: Specifically the state can encourage job creating by investing in the research and development of...
3) What should the role of government be in our community?

Joe Gimse - Government at all levels should be focused on essential public services. These services include public safety and security, educational opportunities, providing for public infrastructure and maintenance needs, care for our most vulnerable citizens and management of opportunities/programs for the advancement of our community good. As a State Senator one of my responsibilities is to assist individuals and businesses navigate through burdensome government regulations and red tape. I believe a truly competitive and business friendly Minnesota will require a government restructuring that is more efficient and less restrictive.

Larry Rice - First the government must keep the public safe. It should also maintain and provide the infrastructure-such as roads, bridges, promotion of high speed internet access-that are used by businesses as well as our residents. The government should promote good health and provide for recreational opportunities. Education is also a key role of government, both to help residents participate in economic opportunities, and also to be engaged and knowledgeable participants in the civic life of our communities and state. Finally, government must help those who need caring for themselves, including our ailing veterans, the elderly, the disabled, and our children.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Joe Gimse - I support legislative actions that increase access to successful job creating programs such as JOBZ, Angel Investment Tax Credits, investment/employment related tax incentives as well as value added agricultural programs and promotional efforts. I will also continue to promote community livability issues such as wastewater and storm water management projects, area lakes and watershed protection/maintenance efforts, transportation related projects, and community development programs.

Larry Rice - A key focus must be on the region’s agricultural and natural capital. I would endorse such strategies as funding the research and development of bio-fuels, green energy and value-added agricultural products. Specifically, this would include support of two important centers of research in Willmar—the diary research facility at Ridgewater College and the MinnWest Technology Campus. These strategies would also require strong advocacy for our region and a commitment to work together with various constituencies in an effort to create good jobs.

House District 13A

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

Paul Anderson - 1) The state budget must be balanced. 2) We need to make our state more business-friendly. 3) Rural students should have the same educational opportunities as those in metro and suburban areas.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above, what is your solution?

Paul Anderson - One way to help make our state more business-friendly, and one that won’t cost more in state revenue, is to work on our permitting and regulatory process. Currently, the process is too long and, in many cases, permits need to go before too many different state agencies. A bill was passed this past session that encouraged the Dept. of Agriculture to take no more than 150 before making a decision on a permit application. The bill carried no penalties for not making a decision in that time frame, but it’s a step in the right direction. I think all state agencies should have similar time lines.

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

Paul Anderson - Government should do the things that individuals alone can’t provide, such as public safety, transportation, and education. Government should help those trying to expand their businesses and not make the process nearly impossible. We all want clean air and water, and we can still have those things while at the same time working through the permitting and regulation process to cut down on red tape.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Paul Anderson - I hear ads on the radio encouraging Minnesota businesses to move to South Dakota because of their better business climate. We need to be working toward making Minnesota more competitive with our neighboring states in terms of such things as unemployment benefits and workmen’s compensation, in addition to tax rates. This is a difficult time to be talking about tax cuts, but it’s also a bad time to be talking about tax increases. One sure way to help the economy is to put more disposable income into consumers’ pockets. Government programs can help to a point, but they are an artificial stimulus, and they don’t last very long. Allowing people to be able to spend more of their money will increase demand and give the economy a boost that will last long and put more Minnesotans back to work.
1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

**Al Juhnke** – Basically, most of what the legislature is focusing on is Jobs, Jobs, Jobs. The state can assist local businesses in moving forward in this economy. A bonding bill, high speed internet access, road construction funding, education funding (early childhood, K-12, & higher ed), Agriculture programs, and tax policy can all assist in a strong job market and good business climate.

**Bruce Vogel** – 1) Jobs-creating and retaining jobs in our region. 2) Lower the tax burden on the hardworking people of our region. 3) Combine overlapping government agencies and eliminate those that aren’t needed and reform their authority to make regulations.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above, what is your solution?

**Al Juhnke** – Last session I advocated for and helped pass the Angel Investor Tax Credit. This was an initiative supported by our local EDA and brought forth by the legislature. This type of tax policy means there are now more opportunities for investor money to reach our start-up companies such as those at the MinnWest Campus. We should continue these types of incentives for our local businesses and farm producers (i.e. Livestock investment grants).

**Bruce Vogel** – Jobs: by reducing the tax burden on small businesses and eliminated some of the over regulating requirements on them when they want to expand or start a new business. Thus we can free up capital and time for them to grow their businesses and hire more people which will then provide more revenue to help balance our budget. We need to create a business friendly environment.

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Al Juhnke** – Our state government has a very basic role in Minnesota. Help provide for public safety (police, fire, food inspection, etc), fund education, fund infrastructure (roads, bridges, high speed internet, etc), and assist those who need help (Veterans, elderly, etc). These are the things we all insist on and will continue to be the main focus on State Government.

**Bruce Vogel** – It should be to protect the citizens of our community and enforce our laws. It should also be fiscally responsible with the taxpayers money.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

**Al Juhnke** – Continue to focus on Agriculture (40% of our Western Minnesota economy). Angel Investment tax credits for Ag biotech companies, Bonding for dairy research facility, poultry research facility, and ag classrooms at Ridgewater college (also bring construction jobs), biofuel and renewable energy development, and livestock investment grants to modernize our animal ag industry will bring jobs to our area and help our local businesses.

**Bruce Vogel** – Help create incentives for new companies and existing one to come to or expand in our community. Reduce or eliminate taxes on businesses to promote job growth and encourage new businesses to start up or come to our state. We need to eliminate undue regulations that continue to drive businesses from our area because of the cost or the length of time it takes to complete them.

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**House District 18B**

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

**Dean Urdahl** – Job Market – economy, transportation and education.

**Darrin Anderson** – My top three priorities are job creation/growth, education and the agriculture. As a teacher in the Willmar Public Schools I will work hard to fix K-12 education because I believe our children deserve every opportunity to be challenged in their learning. Most of all I believe education leads to innovation, new technologies and job creation. Getting people back to work and helping small business grow that they may hire new people and stimulate the local economy. Lastly, agriculture is an area that we need to address because agriculture makes up 40% of the economy in western Minnesota and we need to protect the agricultural industry promoting farms and the products they produce.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above, what is your solution?

**Dean Urdahl** – Minnesota must have a more competitive job market. We need to create a more hospitable business climate by addressing our high corporate tax rate and we need to modify our permitting process to speed it up. I am aware of companies that faced an 18 month permitting process for expansion in Minnesota when it could have been done in 2 months in South Dakota. This kills jobs in our state.

**Darrin Anderson** – I feel that I cannot just pick one because I believe education leads to innovation, new technologies and job creation. Getting people back to work by investing in our small businesses, promoting growth through tax incentives for small businesses to hire more employees, and investing in education. I feel education is a door to better business and also good agriculture. With better education we can create new technologies which will create more job opportunities. Education can lead to better agriculture ideas for bio-fuels, wind energy and creating new ag industries to promote agricultural products.
3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Dean Urdahl** – Allow the market to work and stay out of the way. We should also remove barriers and mandates that inhibit economic growth.

**Darrin Anderson** – The role of government should be to help promote growth of our towns, business, schools and not interfere by getting in the way of these progresses. Government should provide opportunity for our area to thrive and grow.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

**Dean Urdahl** – See #2. But also we must ensure that we maintain a viable transportation system, looking at all options and maintain solid infrastructure for development. Adequate PFA funding is important to this. The water projects funded by PFA provide essential services, jobs and hold down local taxes that would otherwise be needed to pay for the projects at a higher rate.

**Darrin Anderson** – To help create more jobs I say we start investing in our small businesses, promoting growth through tax incentives for small businesses to hire more employees. I look at investing in our businesses as keeping our focus here, in our area, not in the Twin Cities. We need jobs here and our focus of investing in jobs needs to be here.

Spicer Mayor

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

**Denny Baker** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

**Denny Baker** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Denny Baker** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

**Denny Baker** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

Spicer City Council Candidates

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

**Troy Block** – The current economic situation brings on many issues to our area i.e.: Unemployment, foreclosures, Local Government Aid cuts, Tax increases, inflation to name a few.

**Shelly Munyon** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

**Troy Block** – Although I wish there was a “silver bullet” to fix some of these problems, I’m afraid that it’s going to take a change of personal attitude and ethics to get us back on the road to recovery and I feel this will take all the Regions entity’s working together.

**Shelly Munyon** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Troy Block** – Although I’m not a big fan of tax and spend there are basic services that need to be maintained for our citizens, i.e. sewer, water, streets, parks, etc., and in certain instances doing the job right the first time can cost extra. Local government should prudently maintain infrastructure and protect its law abiding citizens.

**Shelly Munyon** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]
4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Troy Block — Stop wasteful spending, lower taxes, create/use smart incentives to bring in and keep business in our region.

Shelly Munyon — [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

New London Mayor

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

Bill Gossman — 1) Keeping the businesses we have here from leaving or closing. We need to support local businesses by buying locally and best of all buying locally produced goods. Getting closer to self reliance will be a future issue and it should be addressed now. 2) Attracting new business that employ local labor and take advantage of the growing diversity in our region. As our area grows more culturally diverse we should be prepared to embrace it rather than confront it or resist it and turn it into an asset instead of a detriment. 3) Staying financially solvent. I think economics is already in the forefront of most other business. Cities are legally bound to have a balanced budget and with state aid starting to dwindle and possibly being drastically reduced, it is imperative that new sources of revenue be realized. Raising property taxes is not only unpopular but it is also unfair and regressive.

2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

Bill Gossman — I think one avenue that could offer some solutions is to explore small scale renewable energy programs that could benefit many people in the construction and agricultural sector, which will increase the tax base as well as create a possible source of income for the city.

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

Bill Gossman — I really believe that the role of government in our community should be not only maintaining infrastructure, (road, water and sewer) but also a participant if not a leader of community and cultural awareness. Local government must also earn the respect of the community by unselfishly carrying out their tasks with the greater good of the community foremost in mind.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

Bill Gossman — As for strategies involved to promote economic development and job creation for our community I would like to see leaders of the business community work together with local governments to find an approach to deal with these issues. Each has something the other does not and each entity could take advantage of that fact.

New London City Council Candidates

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our region that need to be addressed?

Chad Kluver — A) Local government needs to have a closer ear to what the public wants and needs. B) To keep the businesses those are in the community and try to help attract new. C) Public safety.

John Bergman — A) Establishing county and city budgets with all the uncertainties in the state budget. B) Finding funds to maintain and preserve the present programs in health, education, public safety and infrastructure. C) Maintaining and creating an atmosphere for business and job growth with the shortages of funds.

Kevin Dittbenner — a) Aging Infrastructure. Due to our aging sanitary sewer lines, rainwater infiltration into our city’s sanitary sewer system is a major expense for the city since we have to pay to have that water treated. b) Keeping our tax rate low. Despite the reductions and unallotments in Local Government Aid the taxpayers of the city of New London have actually seen their tax rates lowered by around 3% in the past 5 years. Due to the recession and looming future state budget deficits it is likely that we will see further reductions in government aid for our city in the coming years. In order to attract new businesses and homeowners a city of our size can only compete with other cities in a limited number ways. On the financial side the one we have the most control over is keeping the city portion of your property taxes on the low end. We will have to continue to examine our budget carefully and prioritize where necessary. c) The high cost of water and sewer services. While we have seen our tax rate decrease the past few years the cost of water and sewer services are another story. This is one area where we struggle but hopefully with the future improvements to our infrastructure and additional parties connecting to the GLSSWD system (the City of Kandiyohi and several area lakes) we will see a leveling off of the costs. While every year the council and city staff does what they can to minimize the cost of these services to the taxpayers, the water and sewer funds are break even funds and any increase in costs are costs that are being passed on from the county (GLSSWD) to the city to the taxpayer.

Joel Packer — Police protection, Snow Removal, & Pond smell in the summer.
2) Choosing one of the items listed above what is your solution?

**Chad Kluver** – By getting “new blood” into the local government to end the “same old same old” where the same person has been there for several years and not getting things accomplished.

**John Bergman** – Obviously, there is no ONE solution any of the above issues. Concerning the first priority, decision have to be made between wants and needs. What is most important and what are people willing to pay for in taxes and what are they willing to give up. Communicating these dilemmas is important and public participation is needed.

**Kevin Dittbenner** – Aging Infrastructure - The council along with the city staff and engineer are aggressively pursuing low interest loans and grants that will allow us to replace the failing sanitary sewer lines as inexpensively as possible. This will save the taxpayer money in the long run as we will not be paying nearly as much to treat water that is infiltrating our sewer lines.

**Joel Packer** – Pond Smell. Better aeration of the water upstream.

3) What should the role of government be in our community?

**Chad Kluver** – To be able to listen and act on what the community wants. To do what they have enlisted their trust into.

**John Bergman** – County and city governments has to balance the tension between what basic services it is expected to provide with the limited resources it is provided with. At the present time this is a major dilemma. Governments role is to provide an atmosphere where services are provided at a reasonable cost and opportunities for business growth are maximized. Government should always promote a sense of community where everyone has a sense that the government is working for them. Government should also educate the public on the value brought to them with their tax dollar.

**Kevin Dittbenner** – City government should provide basic services such as water and sewer, maintaining of roads and sidewalks, keeping our parks in top notch shape, providing a positive environment where small businesses can grow and prosper, and providing police and fire protection. Certainly there are other areas where the city can provide services but the services I listed above are the core responsibility of the city and the city has a duty to provide those services as efficiently and inexpensively as possible. This is important in order to keep our tax rate lower than most other cities in Minnesota and be an attractive place to live and work.

**Joel Packer** – Don’t spend what we don’t have. Prioritize spending for the greater good.

4) What are some strategies you’d endorse to promote economic development and job creation for our community?

**Chad Kluver** – With not being a member of the local government it is hard to state what I would promote with out knowing what can be offered.

**John Bergman** – I think that even in this period of time when funding resources are strained that government should continue to fund programs for future economic growth. Maybe even increase it. Governments should continue to increase the efficiencies of their programs. Duplications of services eliminated. Consolidating office and programs. Local governments are limited in what they can do with their funding but they need to continue to look forward to the future and not get hung up with the current situation. State legislators and legislation should be considered and supported when necessary.

**Kevin Dittbenner** – For a city of our size utilizing every tool possible to attract new businesses and do what we can to help existing businesses profit and expand is important. I favor just about any strategy from creating TIF (tax increment financing) districts to utilizing the state’s JOBZ or other programs as long as it is cost effective and will be a benefit to both the taxpayer and the business we are trying to attract. We recently created a city EDA (Economic Development Authority) in order to be ready for any future opportunities that may come our way. We also extended city services and a street across highway 23 where ACMC recently built their new building. This area is prime real estate and ready for any company who is looking to expand or plant their roots in New London. I believe there is also room for a very nice residential development out in the area as well.

**Joel Packer** – Offer a good product or service at a fair price.

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**New London School Board**

1) What are the top 3 priority issues for our schools that need to be addressed?

**Robert Moller** – 1) Class Size. 2) Lack of school financing. 3) Lack of useful Technology.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – Funding, funding and what you do with the funding your school MAY receive. Without proper funding and money management your goals will not be met. Goals such as adding more technology into classrooms, retaining smaller class room sizes and maintaining your schools professionals may be lost.

**Helena Lungstrom** – 1) Funding – Schools should not have to rely on the referendum levy as a way to subsidize state funding. The inherent inequities and inadequacies that school districts such as NL-S must face puts the future of our children at risk. 2) Achievement - The academic success of every student enrolled at NL-S is primary. We must support high quality teachers with high quality on going professional development that will drive a rigorous, intellectually and artistically challenging curriculum. 3) Technology - The computer in your cell phone today is 1,000,000 times cheaper and a 1,000 times more powerful, and 100,000 times smaller than the one at M.I.T. in 1965. We are currently trying to prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist, using technologies that haven’t been invented or current technologies that we don’t have the ability to provide to the children in our schools. We live in exponential times and we must keep pace.

**Dan DeGeest** – As stewards of the district funds, it is imperative that we continue to closely monitor the general fund
balance. The levy referendum for operating expenses which was passed in the general election of 2008 commenced with the current school year, and will greatly help with the revitalization of the general fund while maintaining a high quality education. The board and staff must continue to keep a vigilant eye on the status of the fund balance.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

2) What do you think are the primary functions of a School Board member?

**Robert Moller** – To be a link between the community and the school district.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – The main function is to uphold the districts goals while being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. As a board member you are a sound board for the community, teachers and administration.

**Helena Lungstrom** – Together we must ensure that academic and operational resources be adequately distributed throughout all grade levels. That each of our schools will provide a safe learning environment where each and every student and adult is valued and respected. Simply, we must prepare the youth of our community to reach their dreams.

**Dan DeGeest** – I agree with the School Board Member Oath of Office, which states that each member will be asked to fulfill the roles of vision, structure, accountability, and advocacy. Those ideals provide a sound basis for all actions that come before a board member.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

3) What expectations do you have of students graduating from high school? What does a high school diploma mean to you?

**Robert Moller** – That they have the ability to be productive citizens. The diploma is a must to have, but it is just a start.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – I felt that a student that has a graduated from high school has two options. First, be prepared to enter the work force or second, be prepared to continue their education. We need to be open to both because both are needed.

**Helena Lungstrom** – A high school diploma is still that of what it was yesterday, an honor to earn, a great achievement. Today’s high school diploma has also become the beginning step on a seemingly endless ladder that we as a school district must ensure everyone of our children has the opportunity to take.

**Dan DeGeest** – My expectation for students graduating from high school is that each of them recognize and realize their potential. We expect all our students to utilize their education and experiences to become productive and responsible citizens. A high school diploma is a symbol of achievement, and all who receive a diploma should take pride in their accomplishment. This diploma is an asset that our youth carry with them through the gateway to adulthood.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

4) Would you support the development of pay for performance model for your district?

**Robert Moller** – No, may work in large districts but in small districts it will pit teachers against each other instead of working together.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – Yes. Teachers would be held accountable for their performance and get recognized for meeting and exceeding goals.

**Helena Lungstrom** – Shouldn’t the most important measure of a teacher’s success be how much their students have learned? Teachers are educators and need to be respected as such. When funding alone cannot provide pay increases to the excellent educators in our schools, as a district it is our responsibility find creative ways to provide those increases in a fair and equitable way. These educators are doing our communities most important work and should be held in our highest esteem. They have earned and deserve to be recognized for their achievements.

**Dan DeGeest** – Most elements of society tie performance to compensation in some manner. Assuming a fair and equitable model can be developed, I see no reason why it could not be implemented in a school system.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]

5) Do you support for alternative teacher licensure?

**Robert Moller** – No, there is much more to teaching than knowing the subject area.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – I feel that they can be utilized in some instances and work well however I feel that this should only be a temporary solution and used as a last resort while other options are sought.

**Helena Lungstrom** – While this may not be the most politically correct response, alternative teacher licensure is totally ridiculous!

**Dan DeGeest** – When a district is unable to provide students with appropriate learning options because there is no qualified instructor available, this becomes a viable alternative. The Department of Education supports this philosophy. The focus on this topic must remain on the best interest of students, and the educational opportunities that we provide for them.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]
6) What is your position regarding four (4) day school weeks?

**Robert Moller** – A four (4) day week is an act of desperation by districts to compensate for a lack of funding. The top countries in the world sent students to school year round and six (6) days a week.

**Holli Cogelow Ruter** – More data is needed to see what the test results look like for the children that have used this model for a number of years. I know this has been working for districts near us. This may benefit your budget but at what cost to education?

**Helena Lungstrom** – When you hear the term 4 day school week one automatically thinks “money savings”. A way for a struggling district to make up for lost funding, lack of funding or other hardship. I’m not sure any one thinks of going to a 4 day school week to improve “student achievement”. I’m all for being creative to save money, but to put a child’s education potential at risk in the process would never be worth whatever savings could be gained.

**Dan DeGeest** – The popularity surrounding four-day school weeks seems to be supported by financial and convenience reasons. I am not aware of data to support that four-day school week results in an increase to student achievement. Additionally, our 172 student contact days for a school year (which is common throughout the United States) is far less that the 240-day school year found in many other industrialized nations, which may create a disadvantage to the American students.

**Todd Neumann** – [Did not reply to Candidate Questionnaire]