

**Betsy Price for Mayor
League of Neighborhoods Questionnaire
April 11, 2011**

League of Neighborhoods Q&A
Due 5PM Tuesday, April 12, 2011
to libby59@sbcglobal.net

1. For at least 10 years, the City has been pursuing a plan to halt sprawl and densify the Central City) through mixed use zoning and mixed use growth centers, etc.) with the thought of increasing revenues and making it more efficient to provide city services.

We represent single-family neighborhoods. What is your plan to preserve our single-family neighborhoods?

Fort Worth is built on strong neighborhoods. Vibrant cities have both strong, single-family neighborhoods and mixed use growth centers. We must be certain we have the resources to provide good streets, strong police and fire protection, parks and access to libraries to all of our neighborhoods throughout the City, with a long term focus on transportation to be able to accommodate neighborhoods and mixed use growth centers.

2. The City now has over 2,000 gas wells within the City limits, one approximately every half mile. We have more than 800 miles of gas gathering pipelines under our streets. The City's position for many years has been that there isn't much they can do to regulate drilling. Now we are seeing gas wells in the middle of neighborhoods and even perhaps soon in the Stockyards.

What is your view of the City's role in protecting the health, safety and welfare of citizens when it comes to gas drilling? Is the City's 2008 Gas Drilling Ordinance providing for the health, safety and welfare of Fort Worth citizens? How will gas drilling impact the City's tourism and neighborhoods?

As Mayor, my first and foremost priority will be the health and safety of our citizens in Fort Worth.

We need to revisit the 2008 ordinance and study our current zoning in relation to gas drilling and make sure we are doing the right thing. Texas has been drilling for gas for years, but urban natural gas drilling is a new phenomenon. We are still learning the best practices needed to achieve the most economic impact while offering protections to our neighborhoods.

As the Tax Assessor, I have seen firsthand the millions of dollars in new tax revenue this drilling has brought to our community. This is new revenue we can

use to reduce the tax burden on homeowners and pay for basic city services like roads, parks and public safety.

We need to work toward green completions. We need to encourage the use of electric motors to reduce noise. We need to work with TCU's energy department to have up-to-date, independent testing when it comes to natural gas drilling, and we need a process to communicate findings to the gas companies. We need to meet with citizen groups and neighbors to find out what they're thinking.

I don't know that gas drilling done right has any impact on tourism.

As far as the impact of gas drilling on neighborhoods, there are some neighborhoods that want the revenue from gas drilling and some that prefer to not to have drilling so close to home. I will work closely with families near drilling sites, not from City Hall, but on the ground in these neighborhoods, working closely with families to make sure they have as much protection as possible.

At the end of the day, my top priority is to protect our neighborhoods and schools. As we become more educated about the process, the equipment and the impact that gas drilling has on our community, we can better determine our strict and nonnegotiable rules for gas drilling. The revenue from gas drilling done right can help us fund better city services, while it is only a small part of the budget, much of it is dedicated to parks, Lake Worth enhancements and neighborhood enhancements.

3. A big issue for neighborhoods over the last couple of years has been the tendency of the City to issue new ordinances or new policies that affect neighborhoods – but not to include neighborhoods in the development of those policies and ordinances. What is your stance on involving the experience and knowledge of neighborhoods so they are not always in a reactive mode?

The city has to develop a vision for offering a more business-like style of customer service so citizens are receiving the services they need in a timely, efficient manner. For that to be successful, we must work with the neighborhoods. We never want to cram something down a neighborhood's throat, we have to work together.

4. How much tax revenue has the City given up in tax abatements and other tax expenditures? What portion of the city's deficit is represented by tax expenditures? Is this is a significant issue?

What is your plan to inform the citizens about tax abatements that are working (i.e., producing promised jobs, etc.) or not working? When we don't have enough revenue to fund core neighborhoods services such as libraries and parks, is it a

good idea to continue tax abatements? In the case of Neighborhood Empowerment Zones, is it a good idea for neighborhoods to continue them when strategic plans for them have recently been discontinued?

The City's tax rate is 85.5 cents per hundred dollars and is indeed the highest tax rate of all urban cities in Texas. 14.4 cents of that rate is debt, mostly represented by bond expenditures. The City's debt ratio is not particularly high.

Between April 4, 1989, and November 3, 2009, the City issued approximately 34 tax abatements. It is hard to determine the exact amount, but the City has given up millions in tax abatements and many well-paying jobs have been the result. Much sales tax and property tax revenue has come in to the City thanks to successful tax abatements.

The fact is, many tax abatements were successful, and some were not successful and ultimately were terminated. Tax abatements have been used too fluently in the past. They have a place, but they should be looked at carefully, done judiciously and reviewed annually. We should issue an annual newsletter to citizens to report on how abatements are doing for the City.

In truth, tax abatements are dying off. TIFs are the more common method of tax incentives now. TIFs incentivize the developer to provide the infrastructure and to bring in new growth to fund the area. Like other incentives, TIFs have to be looked at carefully and applied judiciously. We have to be careful about the number of TIFs we create to make certain that our City's tax future is secure.

When revenue is very tight, as it is now, it is very hard to offer Neighborhood Empowerment Zones because the money is just not there.

5. Presently, the Fort Worth City Council appoints members of the City's Ethics Commission. Because of that, do members of that commission have a conflict of interest hearing cases involving ethics complaints against members of the City Council? Does the City Council have a conflict of interest in serving as the Appeals Board – even on complaints about its own members – from the Ethics Commission? How would you make the Ethics Commission more independent?

I think that the Council has to appoint independent, strong people to the Ethics Commission. The Ethics Commission is an appointed, unpaid position. It is better that the Fort Worth City Council appoint the Commission than someone at the state level, because people from Fort Worth know and understand what is going on in our community.

The Appeals Board is another story. The Appeals Board might be better if it was more diverse, made up of Council Members and independent citizens.

6. If elected, will you continue to work at the job you have now? If so, can you be a fulltime mayor and also do the job?

Anything worth doing is worth working hard at. Any job I've ever held I've given 110%. I will be a full-time Mayor for Fort Worth. I have already resigned from my current job as the Tarrant County Tax Assessor and requested that the Tarrant County Commissioners expedite finding my replacement. In fact I have requested that I not receive a salary to help expedite the process.