

1. The City is a large and complex organization; tell us about your experience and how it has prepared you to successfully oversee city operations.

My background in accounting and municipal auditing has provided me the skills and discernment to dig into budgets, plans and proposals and work with those who will carry them out. During my years of policy advocacy, I have studied issues and encouraged policy makers to make the right decisions. Besides attending weekly City Council meetings since last June, I have studied the budget and each new ordinance, proposal, and plan before the City Council. I have also met with department heads and have reviewed the city's municipal code and charter. Coupled with this knowledge and my energy to do hard things, I look forward to being a leader who makes right decisions for our city, and once elected to the City Council, I am ready to get to work on day one.



Mary Hilton

2. Lincoln is a growing and vibrant community with citizens engaged in varied interests and pursuits; how will you bring disparate groups together to build consensus? How will you set a standard for civility?

As a wife and the mother of seven, I have spent most of my life as a listener, consensus-builder, and decision-maker. City Council, a direct representation of the people, is the voice of the people in their local government. The City Council's open forum is the place for citizens to seek redress from their government. The council is to be accountable to the people and listen to their concerns in a civil manner. Unlike most of the current council members who have silenced and canceled public input by closing the chamber public assembly, by seeking to end public comment before citizens have had a chance to speak, and who have changed the rules to promote their own agendas, I will honor First Amendment rights of citizens and groups in our city. Government's job is to protect freedoms and liberties, not dictate how few citizens can keep. I will listen carefully and make city government work for the people and be their voice on the council.

3. The Citizen's Transportation Coalition recommended and voters approved an increase in the local option sales tax to help finance Lincoln's streets infrastructure needs. Are you supportive of the quarter-cent sales tax and Advisory Committee on Transportation?

Besides high taxes, the second most voiced complaint by citizens as I have gone door-to-door is street maintenance. Pot-holed, unsalted, and poorly funded and maintained roads are a direct result of misplaced budget priorities. Though vehicle owners pay Wheel Tax, Motor Vehicle Tax, and Gas Tax, this essential city service not been a fully funded by current and past administrations. Since street maintenance had fallen so far behind, the Advisory Committee on Transportation proposed and voters approved the tax. The city has been collecting this tax for the last 1 ½ years. As a councilmember, I would focus on efficiencies, ensuring that taxpayers get a return on their investment by actually maintaining the roads vehicles drive on. I would monitor sales tax collections from the ¼ cent sales tax to ensure that the tax has a sunset once financial goals are met; I will work early in the process on setting budget priorities that fully fund future street maintenance.

4. What strategies would you pursue to keep the city affordable to live in?

Keeping the tax burden low and having housing available at all price points is an important part of making Lincoln an affordable city to live in. I believe that affordable housing happens when the local economy is flourishing and when people can work and afford to pay for their own homes. As a believer in the free market, getting unnecessary government interference out of business is my goal. Cutting unwieldy regulations and ending business-killing mandates is important to a healthy local economy. Economy is life. Lincoln's entrepreneurs must be free to run their businesses, keep their doors open, and sell the products and services their customers want.

A specific policy goal to keep Lincoln affordable is to allow Sanitary Improvement Districts. By limiting the debt that SIDs can incur and ensuring that good engineering and solid board management happens with each SID, we can safely promote the natural growth of our city. It is estimated that for each house that is built, two jobs are created in the local economy. Omaha has successful SIDs, and so can we. Another specific policy goal to help lower the tax burden is to change our approach to street building. Complete streets cost 6 million a mile to build, so modifying the streets to something that we can afford will help buffer the cost to taxpayers as our city grows

5. Lincoln is expected to receive additional revenue from casino gambling revenue. What should the City of Lincoln do with the additional revenues?

If the city incurs additional revenue from expanded gambling, I believe that revenue gains should be returned to taxpayers by reducing property taxes.

6. What do you see as the City's role in retaining incumbent businesses and attracting new businesses and employees?

The City of Lincoln must be open for business for incumbent businesses and start-ups. To retain existing businesses, carefully listening to business owners and implementing the kind of policies that make Lincoln business-friendly is my goal.

Business leaders that I have spoken with are concerned; the council and administration leaders often seem to have their own political agendas as priorities instead of seeking to be attentive to the reasonable needs and legitimate concerns of business owners. I know there is a desire and need for a 5G network in the community, workforce housing, and eliminating unreasonable and expensive building codes. Listening is not enough; these businesses need action, or they will leave our community and take away thousands of jobs with them. Reducing bureaucratic red-tape, and keeping property taxes, franchise and other fees low will help attract start-ups and make Lincoln an attractive city to live in and move to. More often than not, growth happens when government gets out of the way. Every decision I make will be to maximize the legitimate freedoms of individuals and businesses.

7. What will you do to drive innovation in the Lincoln community?

Opening doors to free markets encourage competition and innovation. As we endeavor to reduce regulations and get back to the basics of good government, businesses large and small are able to focus their energy and creativity into finding new ways to serve their customers and make a profit. When businesses thrives, the entire community thrives.