

2015 Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Survey

CANDIDATE NAME: John Safford

CANDIDATE FOR (OFFICE): Mayor

Question #1: What sustainability initiatives or efforts have you implemented or advanced as an elected official or private citizen?

Frankly, I like trees and, while I recognize the concern and expense of proper maintenance, I like the idea of being able to walk down a city street in a light rain and not get wet. At a condo I manage, we recently worked with the Sustainable tree program to plant the “Man O’ War” elm at the corner of Nelson and Union.

Question #2: What, if anything, would you propose to do locally to confront climate change?

I manage a lot of properties in Saratoga and the last few years have been more than normally cold and snowy. When you ask this question I am inclined to answer that I confront whatever I am personally challenged with.

Question #3: The City Council recently adopted a new Comprehensive Plan, which embodies and continues the “City in the Country” vision for Saratoga Springs. According to the Comprehensive Plan: “This concept reflects a city with an intensively developed urban core and an economically vibrant central business district, with well-defined urban edges and an outlying area of rural character, comprised of agriculture, open lands, natural and diverse environmental resources, and low density development.”

Do you support the “City in the Country” vision?

I support the “City in the Country” vision as a vision but not as a political argument that demeans the fundamental American right to own property

Do you believe that sustainable economic growth can be achieved through this vision?

I believe that sustainable economic growth is achieved by individuals who have the guts to take risks and that “if you build it they will come” is a myth. Saratoga Springs is hugely successful because of individuals who put their lives on the line to build something here not because of the “City in the Country”.

Do you think the “City in the Country” vision should be altered? If so, how?

I am not a little alarmed that the Comprehensive Plan as recently adopted will lead to “Form Based” zoning laws that will further discourage small businesses from opening or moving here.

Question #4: What comments do you have about the following priority issues for Sustainable Saratoga?

Affordable housing:

I believe in supply and demand and that there is a balance between the number of available units and the number of people who desire to live in the city. I clearly recognize that the vitality of the city needs to have seniors, singles and young marrieds in the city and am very interested in a possible zoning change that will legally allow garage and out building apartments to increase supply.

Managing downtown parking:

I am inclined to look at paid garage parking (with local coupons) as a good option for sustainable parking but I do not think paid street parking should even be considered.

Waste management, including plastic bag reduction:

Paper bags kill trees, plastic bags are cheap but a recycling nightmare and I keep forgetting to bring my reusable bags to the store (although I am getting better at it).

Promoting renewable energy:

I have recently become interested in Solar as a viable energy vehicle but recognize that we are at the “bleeding edge” of its practical sustainability.

Expanding the city’s urban forest, and increasing green infrastructure:

I already have indicated that I like the idea of an urban forest and think that it has its own natural energy saving properties by shading roofs in summer.

Question #5: If elected, what types of sustainability efforts (other than those listed above) would you promote or emphasize?

Every day we are challenged to make decisions that support our own sustainability. I am a Christian and my faith encourages me to share what surplus I may have with others. I am quick to point out that, in economic terms, surplus indicates profit and that it is my choice to either “build bigger barns” or to share it. My opinion of sustainability is a society of profit makers who share their surplus with others.