

2015 Sustainable Saratoga Candidate Survey

CANDIDATE NAME: William J. McTygue

CANDIDATE FOR (OFFICE): Commissioner of Public Works

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

During my tenure as the former Director of Public Works, I helped spearhead the City's first ever energy performance contract. Planning for this energy savings initiative began in 2005 and represented a two-year \$1.7 million energy performance initiative undertaken in conjunction with and under contract by Johnson Controls, the City's preferred energy performance contractor. Under this contract the City was guaranteed a long-term savings equal to or greater than the overall cost of the project. The project included an all encompassing approach of new energy savings construction and equipment installation in several city owned buildings and facilities. The project focus involved several key buildings including City Hall, the Canfield Casino in Congress Park, the City's two indoor Ice Rink facilities on Weibel Avenue, the Broadway Visitor Center building, the Lake Avenue Fire House as well as the Senior Citizen Center and the Franklin Community Center buildings. For each building covered under this contract, improvements typically included installation construction of new energy-saving light fixtures and new energy efficient heating system controls. For the Canfield Casino in Congress Park, new energy efficient heating system boilers were installed along with modernization replacement of the air-conditioning chiller unit. The two skating rink facilities were re-equipped with new high efficiency ice-rink chillers. Additional work specific to City Hall, was the added installation of attic insulation and the installation of new energy efficient windows where needed.

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

I fully support sensible City policies and initiatives dealing with green policy initiatives. As Commissioner of Public Works, I would undertake a review of a second, City sponsored, energy performance initiative. This would likely include a further analysis of energy efficiency opportunities within City Hall. Of all the City owned buildings, City Hall represents the largest consumer of energy. Therefore, a continued focus on further improving energy savings opportunities within City Hall would be a priority. I would undertake a second performance contract starting with an analysis of the air-conditioning needs of City Hall with the goal of eliminating the dozens of inefficient window unit air-conditioners that currently exist in nearly every window throughout the building.

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?

Yes, I support the City in the Country” vision that applies to all of Saratoga Springs.

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

Yes, I believe Saratoga Springs can achieve economic growth while at the same time protecting the “City in the Country” vision. I do not believe the two have to be mutually exclusive. If we choose to stay true to smart growth principles of allowing economic growth while at the same time protecting our important open spaces and view-sheds in our City’s Outside District, we can achieve both economic and environmental success.

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

The question of visualizing the “City in the Country” can be very subjective depending on an individual’s personal point of view. Even in instances where residential subdivisions are currently allowed in the outer district, I believe it’s important to allow an open dialogue with the developer to ensure the City’s interest in encouraging large set-backs from roadways is protected. Given our recent experience with new construction in the outer district, I believe alterations to set back regulations in the zoning code should be reviewed and modified to allow for greater set back, wider tree belts and wider sidewalks.

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

Affordable housing:

The issue of housing and residential affordability in Saratoga Springs is, perhaps, one of the greatest challenges facing our city today. The current economic reality has our city in the midst of a very healthy and escalating real estate market that drives the local cost of housing and rentals in this very attractive market even higher. In order to accommodate the need for a more diverse offering of housing stock that is affordable to the broader community, the city must be proactive in working with developers and encouraging new projects be built that would allow greater affordability. By utilizing land use tools already available, the city could also adopt changes to its zoning code to allow greater flexibility in the construction of neighborhood in-law apartment additions and garage apartments were appropriate and in accordance with guidelines established by the city.

Managing downtown parking:

With the continued success of our downtown comes the problem of adequate downtown parking. The solution lies with a multi faceted approach to creating more parking. I believe additional parking opportunities lie in the downtown area and must be included with a new comprehensive and updated plan for downtown parking solutions. I would work with the Mayor's Downtown Parking Committee in order to reach consensus on a real plan going forward. Solutions for additional parking lie both with the City, private property owners and developers planning new projects within the downtown district. My first priority for added parking, especially for the City Center, would be to open meaningful discussions with the property owners of the Saratoga Hilton Hotel. Here lies the greatest opportunity for a public-private partnership for increased parking that would benefit the City Center, the Hilton Hotel and downtown in general.

Waste management, including plastic bag reduction:

Recycling of plastic bags should be encouraged and made part of the County's mandatory recycling program of various waste stream items.

Promoting renewable energy:

As the former Director of Public Works, I secured a \$500,000 New York State grant that recognized the early success the City's Landfill Gas Energy-to-Ice Program. With the completion of capping the City's Weibel Avenue landfill in the fall of 1994 followed by the installation of a methane gas collection system in 1995, the need to deal with the accumulated methane gas became an issue. Beginning in 1997, the completed cogeneration system project was placed in operation. That project utilized the landfill methane gas to operate the 307 KW co-generator that supplied electrical energy to the chillers at Weibel Ave. Ice Rink facility. I was proud to have played a roll in the success of that project. Today, the City's interest has turned to solar energy opportunities that exist utilizing the Weibel Avenue Landfill property. I fully support this initiative.

City sponsored green policy programs and policies are projects I would continue to advocate. As Commissioner of Public Works, I would initiate and undertake a review for the possibility of a second energy performance initiative for City owned buildings. This would be a follow-up to the first and very successful \$1.7 million energy performance program that I supported and helped design and administer as Director of Public Works in 2006-2007. I believe a second energy performance program could further enhance the City's success in reducing its carbon foot-print and saving energy. City Hall would again be a priority for reducing energy consumption, especially when dealing with the dozens of unit air-conditioners in practically every window in City Hall.

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

I fully support the Sustainable Saratoga Tree initiative and will cooperate in every way to form a partnership to increase and expand its effectiveness.

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

For me, sustainability has two different meanings - Economic Sustainability as well as Physical Sustainability. Economic Sustainability is vitally important in the City's ability to thrive and grow economically. Economic success also allows the City to generate much needed tax revenue to support the operations of City government and allow the City enough revenue to further invest in programs and projects that enhance our City's quality of life.

Physical sustainability recognizes the City's ability to keep up with the demands of continued growth. I am concerned about the City's ability to keep up with the current pace of city-wide growth and new construction. I believe, we are not keeping up, especially when it comes to issues dealing with infrastructure, traffic and affordable housing. Also, in accordance with our open space needs and the fact that available funding for the City's first "Land Preservation Bond Act" is near completed, I would favor a renewal of the City's "Land Preservation Bond Act be considered for voter approval.