



## Introduction

The Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership (SCCDP) is the sole combined chamber of commerce and economic development organization in Seward County with a standing membership of approximately 280 public and private sector businesses. As such, SCCDP wishes to give its business members and the general public relevant information on economic development-related issues for the upcoming primary and general elections on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, respectively. Candidates for Nebraska State Legislature, Seward County Commissioner, Seward City Mayor, Seward City Council, and Milford City Council were contacted by SCCDP to answer the following questions (modified for each race) regarding local business, economic development, and community growth:

- Why are you running for office?
- Why do you love District 24/Seward County/Seward/Milford?
- Why should a business person support your election to office?
- How will you plan to make District 24/Seward County/Seward/Milford a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?
- What is the number one issue currently facing District 24/Seward County/Seward/Milford?
- What should be District 24's/Seward County's/Seward's/Milford's top economic priorities?
- What is your perspective on District 24's/Seward County's/Seward's/Milford's growth? In other words, how would you ensure District 24/Seward County/Seward/Milford stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?

Candidates running for Seward City Council were also asked the following question:

- Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.

The candidates were given approximately two weeks to respond after initial contact. Below are their responses:



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**Nebraska State Legislature – District 24  
Patrick Hotovy  
Responded 4/21/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I am running for office because I have had a longstanding interest in the Legislature and have a strong desire to serve the residents of the 24th district. I have spent my life in service to District 24 as a physician, business owner and member of the York School Board, and would like to earn the trust of voters to serve as your 24th District Senator.

**Why do you love District 24?**

I love District 24 because it has been my home nearly all my life of my life. I grew up on our family farm in Bee and our family made a life in District 24. We raised our children here and we will continue to live in and enjoy life in District 24. This is our home and we have been fortunate to create a great life for our family and I want to take my love for District 24 to Lincoln to be your representative in the Legislature.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I believe it is important that we promote policies that help our businesses grow. We need to work for our local businesses, to develop policies, to help them flourish and to attract new business to our communities. The pandemic has taught us we need to focus and be creative as businesses and communities to grow our workforce. As a business owner for 30 years, I understand the changes we must make in order to compete locally for workforce and to help grow our communities. I will be that voice for businesses of the 24th District.

**How will you plan to make District 24 a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

The communities of District 24 have much to offer as we work together to build and grow our workforce. We need to fix our tax system in order to make our district more welcoming for economic development, which in turn will help us attract new businesses. We need to generate a better inventory of workforce housing to attract new employees and businesses to

the district. I will work with our communities to develop the resources necessary to train and retain a quality workforce with the skills that our local businesses need. We need to assure adequate broadband access throughout our district to help local businesses compete in our global economy. This will allow local business to thrive and provide opportunities for people to work remotely for companies across the US and still live the good life in Nebraska and especially District 24.

**What is the number one issue currently facing District 24?**

In listening to residents of the district, the biggest issue facing people is taxes, especially property taxes. We as a state need to make sure our tax structure is one which will help grow local business, thus growing our district. This year the Legislature passed LB 873, cutting personal income tax rates, lowering the corporate tax rate and providing funding in the property tax credit relief fund. This was a great start and now we need to continue addressing our tax structure to help local business and communities thrive.

**What should be District 24's top economic priorities?**

Continued responsible growth. Working to attract new business and helping existing businesses grow. Ensuring a future where workforce housing will meet the demand and investing in workforce development helping local business grow.

**What is your perspective on District 24's growth? In other words, how would you ensure District 24 stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of our communities?**

We must first focus on addressing the needs of our communities and understand what the communities need for growth. We must advocate together as communities to recruit and retain talent to meet the needs of local business and our communities. Working together as communities for the future will allow us to continue to enjoy the quality of life which has helped us grow and retain our close-knit communities



**Nebraska State Legislature – District 24  
Jana Hughes  
Responded 4/21/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I am not a politician and had no inclination to do something like this. I am currently a member of the Seward Public School board and the superintendent suggested I run. My husband and I thought about it and spoke with a lot of people and decided that it should be people like us in there. I grew up on a farm near Goehner. My brother is 4th generation farmer of Luebbe farms, my husbands family owns Hughes Brothers Inc Manufacturing which just celebrated 100 years in business. He, his brother and cousin are 3rd generation owners. We have a longevity in our district and hopefully will have many generations to come and truly want to keep our district and Nebraska the great place that it is.

I have an engineering degree and before I became a stay-at-home mom I worked as an engineering consultant. Working as a consultant meant that I had to work with many different people in every business we went into. I learned how to develop those relationships and work together to come up with solutions that we implemented on the various projects. I am analytical and will use that to see all sides of an issue before making a decision.

My strategy is to develop relationships and I am working on meeting with many groups/boards/organizations and businesses so I can have those relationships made in Dist. 24 so that when legislation passes my desk I know who to reach out to and see how it affects our district. Once elected I aim to develop relationships with my fellow senators so we can collaborate our efforts to pass good legislation for our state.

**Why do you love District 24?**

When John and I first were married we lived in Lincoln because that was a “halfway” point for us – he worked in Seward and I would fly out of Omaha. Once our daughter Lena was born and I started staying at home we knew that we would be moving to Seward County because that is where we wanted to raise our family. It’s a place with a strong community and good values that would surround our children and family.

- The sense of community
- Strong Christian presence and influence as can be seen by the number of churches of worship and parochial schools that are available, including a Christian university.
- The strong education system from our public schools, private schools and then the universities and community colleges all located in Dist 24. We are very fortunate for the good options that we have access to.
- The generosity of our people – this can be seen whenever you pick up a local paper. The fundraisers and galas that support churches, schools, non-profits, etc. Also – when a person/family experiences a traumatic event it is great to see the community rally and show support for that family/individual.
- All the civic and community organizations that one can get involved with (Kiwanis, Rotary, Ducks Unlimited, GFWC, 4-H, Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts, Young Professionals, etc.)
- Community amenities available - ballfields, libraries, walking/biking trails, swimming pools, tennis & pickleball courts, parks, golf courses, etc.
- Strong work ethic. I think this stems from being a “rural” area. Our forefathers worked hard to establish themselves and that work ethic has been passed from generation to generation.
- We are a community with strong morals and ethics where a handshake counts!

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I understand how important businesses are to our District. We need to focus on keeping our existing businesses strong as well as attracting new businesses and encouraging entrepreneurs. I will also try to make sure legislation doesn't create more burdens and barriers to a business. I believe that capitalism works and that we have to let the private sector enjoy the freedom they need to be successful and not burdened with unnecessary government red tape.

**How will you plan to make District 24 a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Work on good legislation that ensures businesses can prosper and grow. In addition ensure that legislation doesn't become a burden or barrier for communities or businesses to be in Nebraska. Over regulation can do that and prevent entrepreneurship from blossoming.

I think there can be creative approaches to making this happen. Encouraging public/private partnerships can help achieve goals and bring some private funding to help with affordable housing or infrastructure, for example.

Encourage communities to work on plans that help encourage growth of amenities. We need to have these in place to keep employees and residents in our communities. I can support legislation that provides incentives toward these kinds of projects. Personally speaking I am part of a committee working on getting a Wellness Center built for the Seward Community and that amenity will be a huge advantage for attracting and keeping people/businesses in that area. The wellness center project is taking advantage of matching grants that are out there for communities to use to bring such amenities to communities.

**What is the number one issue currently facing District 24?**

The number one issue I keep hearing about at my meet and greets from constituents is the high property taxes we have. I do not believe this is a property tax issue but rather a school funding issue. If we as a state truly value education then every student across the state should get some state funding. We need to change how we fund our schools in Nebraska so that those funds come from a variety of sources and not just property taxes for all schools.

**What should be District 24's top economic priorities?**

Addressing the property tax issue.

Accessible childcare – women in the workforce are at the lowest level since 1986. This is directly tied to lack of childcare. According the York County Development Corp there is a 60 child service gap in York alone.

Accessible, affordable, quality high speed broadband. This is a necessity (not a nice to have). A USDA study found that 39% of rural areas lack good broadband access. We cannot compete with other states or communities if this is not available. We are also at a unique time because people have realized that they don't have to live where they work, so we can attract people to move to our district and work from here. Again – have to have high speed broadband to do this.

Retaining the people we already have here to help address the worker shortage. The above things will help as well as looking at keeping our kids here. This can start in the schools (high schools and colleges and universities) by expanding apprenticeship opportunities.

**What is your perspective on District 24's growth? In other words, how would you ensure District 24 stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of our communities?**

District 24 is fortunate in where we are situated in the state. The bulk of the district runs along the Interstate and we are fairly close to sizable metro areas (Omaha, Lincoln and Columbus). If you look at the census numbers across the state the communities that grew or at least stayed the same size have strong infrastructure in terms of roads. Our district is growing at a very supportable rate. To keep that “small town or close” feel in our communities we need to maintain the community in terms of keeping it unique. Not a bedroom community but something that draws people to it. Examples of this are festivals or unique experiences that our different communities have and therefore attract visitors: Seward 4th of July and Christmas celebration, Stromsburg Swedish festival, county fairs, Wessels living history farm, community celebrations, etc. You also need places/amenities to keep their own community members in town such as restaurants, libraries, recreational activities, etc.



**Seward County Commissioner – District 3  
Tyler Dickinson, Republican  
Responded 4/15/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

Seward County Commissioner District 3

**Why do you love Seward County?**

I was born and raised in Seward County, I have spent my life in the agricultural environment of this county and value the contribution that agriculture makes to our county. My personal values, work ethic, and spirit of community service have all been formed through my lifelong experiences of being raised and living in Seward County.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I believe the business and agricultural communities need to work together for the success of each other. I am not a politician and I have no personal agenda; I belong to no special interest groups and will not seek endorsements from organizations outside of Seward County. I will look at every issue brought to the Commissioner's Agenda for its value to Seward County and how it will impact Seward County citizens.

**How will you plan to make Seward County a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

I don't think anyone will argue the fact that Seward County is a great place to live, we have great schools, an excellent medical system, a broad range of businesses and activities for all age ranges. By maintaining the current community, it's services will continue to attract businesses, but we must continue to provide affordable housing if we want to attract more businesses and population, (see next answer)

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward County?**

I believe the biggest issue in Seward County is the lack of affordable housing for those who want to work and live in Seward County. As new businesses are attracted to the county, we must make sure the work force has the opportunity to live in Seward so our businesses and community can benefit from the growth instead of forfeiting that growth and income to surrounding cities such as Lincoln.

**What should be Seward County's top economic priorities?**

From the standpoint of the office I am seeking, the roads of Seward County would be a top priority. Maintenance of the road system in Seward County is a complicated process, dependent on many factors including, budget, staffing, working with other agencies, and the multitude of damage that was done 2 years ago in spring weather conditions.

**What is your perspective on Seward County's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward County stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

I believe all entities of the county; business, agricultural, city, county, public, and private, need to work together to optimize all resources that are available to maintain and create new opportunities that will benefit Seward County and its citizens.



**Seward County Commissioner – District 3  
Raegan Hain, Republican  
Responded 4/19/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I am running for Seward County Commissioner to ensure the voter's of District 3 are being represented within our county. This is a large area with many communities and I intend to be a representative for all of them. The number one priority of a County Commissioner is county roads. It would be my responsibility as Commissioner to ensure that we are funding projects for county roads and maintaining them. It is necessary to work as a team with other Commissioners and the road department to see this happen. Open communication is key. I welcome contact from voters and will address their needs and concerns. I will be a County Commissioner who is not only present, but active within the entire district and engaging with the communities. It is important for people to know that being a Commissioner requires so much more than just attending Tuesday morning meetings. To be a true representative, we need to be out in our communities and working with them to ensure we are hearing from them and addressing their concerns. It also requires networking with other service providers within the community and hearing from them about what issues they are facing so they can be addressed. It is necessary to build relationships with businesses and community agencies so we can better understand the issues they are facing in order to support Seward County.

**Why do you love Seward County?**

I love Seward County for a number of reasons! First and foremost, I love the people here. I love that we are surrounded by agriculture and we support farmers and ranchers. I love that our county is growing and yet we continue to maintain a small town atmosphere throughout our county. I also love that the people in our County are active. There are several groups and organizations that lift up our residents and our small businesses. I also am extremely grateful that we get to raise our children here, in an environment where they are supported and invested in.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I am an open and approachable individual who believes in the value of supporting businesses in our community to see our communities prosper. I am also very interested in hearing from businesses about plans they have for growth, how they support their community, and what if any help they need. I want to see our county thrive.

**How will you plan to make Seward County a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

We need to start by increasing wages for county employees so they are competitive with other counties. If there is a significant difference in wages, we lose valuable employees. A lot of time and money are invested into training and we don't want to lose good people to surrounding counties. We also need to look at housing. I love seeing and hearing about projected new plans and developments for economic growth but we have to have housing in order to bring businesses in and keep people living and working in Seward County. If we don't have adequate housing, people will either have to commute or they will find employment elsewhere. This is a trend already in our county.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward County?**

The number one concern I hear about from community members is our county roads. We are surrounded by agriculture and our farmers need to be able to access these roads and bridges safely. When our county roads, ditches, and bridges are in need of improvement and repair, farmers and residents are damaging equipment and vehicles which increases their cost to repair and maintain vehicles and equipment. With that being said, in order to be competitive and retain and employ individuals, we need to ensure that wages are in line with surrounding communities.

**What should be Seward County's top economic priorities?**

- Improving our county roads and bridges and ensuring they are maintained and safe to travel
- Improved wages to retain and attract employees
- Access to affordable housing
- Access to clean drinking water
- Access to county wide internet service

**What is your perspective on Seward County's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward County stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Seward County is growing, however we don't have enough housing currently to bring in more jobs. I would like to see more access to affordable housing to keep people working and living in Seward County. Seward County has so many activities throughout the different communities that promote community engagement and allow people to participate in small town events and I would like to continue to see these activities promoted so they continue. I also feel that it is very important to support our small businesses in order for our communities to grow and allow citizens within these communities to get to know their business owners.



**Seward County Commissioner – District 3  
Mary Reetz, Republican  
Responded 4/21/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

The last few years I question myself on running for county commissioner. The time is right for me. I have more time to commit and can focus on bettering the county. The safety of our roads is a big concern as our employment. I would work with the towns and see their needs as along with the county employees and tax payers. I consider myself a people person.

**Why do you love Seward County?**

The growth of Seward county is amazing! We have great schools and our 4H program is wonderful. Our agricultural is striving and we are attracting young families. I grew up here and it is a great county to be part of. A great place to raise a family. Local law enforcement doing a commendable job. My list could go on!

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I grew up in Seward county as my parents were business owners and I learned a great deal from them. I support local business and hope they all strive in their own business. I consider myself to have a smart business head as I too have a small business to run. I always have a helping hand for anyone. Always looking to improve anything that comes my way.

**How will you plan to make Seward County a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

To promote jobs that are available one could host a job fair and advertise in surrounding towns to reach out to more potential people. Need to attend meeting in our towns to see what is happening. I would love to reach out to potential business owners, take them on a tour of our county. Media is a big part to attract ones attention. Again we have great schools and churches to attract potential prospectors. I believe we are a friendly community! We also have

SCC and Concordia to attract jobs, businesses and a great place to raise a family. I would be involved going to meetings to be aware of new developments.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward County?**

Safety of our rural roads. Roads are not properly maintain. The crown on the roads are dangerous and if you get over too far it is possible you could end up in ditch or roll your vehicle. One day there is gravel on your road and the next day it is taken off by maintainer. I also fear for school bus drivers that go out on these roads. Our roads take on more traffic due to chicken farms, more use of semis than years before. The approach of our bridges also need attention.

**What should be Seward County's top economic priorities?**

Economic growth and with that comes infrastructure. Our county is growing and we need to be prepared.  
Public spending.  
Stability.

**What is your perspective on Seward County's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward County stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

I believe our county is staying competitive and we do have a close feel of our community. We are close enough to Lincoln that families live in Seward or rural areas.while they commute to work in Lincoln. Our farmers/livestock play a great role in our county. They produce a great environment for our families. Our smaller towns/villages attract people to become residents. The county and the city of Seward is growing and we need to be ready. We need to help provide what the younger families want to keep them here.



**Seward County Commissioner – District 3  
Bob Vrbka, Democrat  
Responded 4/22/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

To use my experience in serving District 3 and Seward County.

**Why do you love Seward County?**

I have been a resident for 52 years.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I will represent business to the best of my ability.

**How will you plan to make Seward County a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

I believe Seward County is a jobs-friendly county.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward County?**

Two issues need attention. Housing and available workers. The two issues go hand in hand. Without affordable housing it is hard to attract workers from outside the county.

**What should be Seward County's top economic priorities?**

Seward County's top priorities should include housing.

**What is your perspective on Seward County's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward County stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

*\*No response provided\**



**Seward County Commissioner – District 5  
Greg Radke, Republican  
Responded 4/10/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

Policies and practices that are unsafe for the motoring public in our roads department that lead to wasteful spending.

**Why do you love Seward County?**

The feeling of everybody knows everybody. You can go anywhere in the county, you might not know their name but you recognize them.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

For a business to operate at its peak, it has to get customers in the door. That can't happen without a properly functioning infrastructure.

**How will you plan to make Seward County a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

In today's high tech world it has to start with infrastructure (roads & high speed internet). With those in place, then we can not only attract businesses but the right businesses to Seward County. This will naturally bring the employees to the area. However, we don't want to forget about the workforce that currently lives in Seward County.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward County?**

We have an aging and in some cases a failing bridge system on our county roads. When bridges have to be closed it will greatly affect our farming communities profits which in turn affects the profits of our other businesses. This needs to be addressed before continuing discussions on new paving projects. A new road will lose its luster when other roads have "Road Closed" barricades because a bridge can't pass inspection.

**What should be Seward County's top economic priorities?**

Maintaining and supporting our current local businesses along with attracting new and complimenting businesses.

**What is your perspective on Seward County's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward County stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

This is where it is crucial to attract the right businesses. We need businesses that will take stock here and give back to the community.



**Seward City Mayor  
Josh Eickmeier  
Responded 4/21/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I love Seward. I first ran for Mayor because I know what a special community Seward is and want to work to keep it that way for future generations. Many of my friends that I grew up with are now raising their children in Seward and I want to ensure that they have at least the same opportunities that I had growing up here. I can't think of a greater honor and privilege than to continue serving as Mayor of my hometown.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I'm proud to have been born and raised in Seward and graduated from St. John Lutheran School and Seward High School. After living in Lincoln for college and then spending the next couple years traveling around the country for my job, I gained a greater appreciation for how truly special Seward is and how lucky I am to have grown up here. It's the people that make Seward such an amazing community. We are fortunate to have so many civic organizations that are continuously working to improve Seward. It's that great spirit of volunteerism that makes our Fourth of July celebration one of the best in the country. I love Seward and the fact that so many people care about our community and its future.

**Why should a businessperson support your election to office?**

It's important that we support our local businesses. Often when people discuss economic development, they focus on attracting new businesses to our community. However, I believe it is just as, if not more important to support the businesses that are already here and have already invested in our community. Local business owners often take huge financial risks and even go into debt to start their businesses because they believe in this community and are committed to making their businesses a success. As Mayor, I made it a priority to implement and expand our two main economic development tools – Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and LB 840 Economic Development Plan (LB 840). These programs have made available to Seward business owners hundreds of thousands of dollars in financial support to improve and expand their businesses. I am especially proud of our support of businesses around the Courthouse Square and the broader downtown business district. For example, we are in the third phase of our downtown

revitalization program, which allows us to leverage additional State tax dollars for downtown businesses improve their buildings' exteriors and return them to their historic beauty.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

When it comes to attracting new businesses to our community, the two main financial incentives the City has available are Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and LB 840 Economic Development Plan (LB 840). Since I've been Mayor, these programs have attracted more than 20 new businesses to Seward. Another factor for attracting businesses is that we have one of the lowest property tax rates in Nebraska. As Mayor, not only has the City never raised property taxes, under my leadership we have lowered Seward's property taxes. In fact, when you include all property taxes that Seward residents pay (City, County, School District, etc.), we have the lowest property tax rate of any city our size or larger. As for attracting employees to our area, it is important that Seward continues to have a great reputation when it comes to schools, amenities, and overall quality of life.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

We are fortunate that Seward doesn't have a lot of the issues that other communities face. Many of Seward's issues are actually good problems to have. Many of the challenges we face are the result of our community growing because people want to live here and residents expect a high quality of life. Therefore, I would say our number one issue is making sure that we don't get complacent and continue to work towards making Seward the best community it can be. For example, one quality of life expectation that many residents have is access to reliable high-speed internet. Much of Nebraska lacks broadband internet access. While we do have internet providers in Seward, what we don't have is a reliable high-speed fiber internet service like ALLO Communications, which will begin building out Seward yet this year. This is exciting news that will benefit Seward residents, businesses, and industries now and for years to come.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Seward's top economic priority is addressing our housing shortage. In a sense, having a housing shortage is a good problem to have because it means people want to live in Seward. Therefore, we have a strategic and comprehensive plan to identify where future developments should be in Seward and then work with landowners and developers to plan smart growth, so we have lots available for people to build new homes. An added benefit to Seward residents building new homes in Seward is that their current homes are then for sale which improves our overall housing market. Having a robust housing market is essential for promoting economic development and attracting employees to Seward.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Seward's growth must continue to be smart and strategic. Growing too fast can create growing pains and cause a community to be stretched too far too quickly and risk losing its identity.

Since I've been Mayor, Seward has grown consistently at one percent per year which has allowed us to maintain the feeling of community that we all value while attracting people, businesses, and industries to Seward.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue?  
Please explain your reasoning.**

I will proudly vote "YES" for the Seward Wellness Center. Seward has many great amenities and recreational opportunities including the Seward Community Golf Course, Dowding Swimming Pool, and Plum Creek Park. A Wellness Center is the one amenity our community is missing. Having a year-round facility with an indoor pool would better serve the recreational needs of residents of all ages. I'm very proud of the great work the Wellness Center Committee has done in raising a significant amount of private donations and garnering community support.



**Seward City Mayor  
Sid Kamprath  
Responded 4/20/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I have served on the Seward city council since 2006, and believe the time is right to bring an experienced, yet fresh approach to the office of mayor. My experience on the city council has allowed me to be an integral part of the policy-making decisions that have positively impacted the citizens of Seward for years. As Mayor, I believe I can build on those accomplishments from the administration side by providing clear, thoughtful, and balanced leadership. I am excited to explore ways in which the city can improve its services to the citizens, operate efficiently, and control rising utility rates. Seward is in a very good position right now and is on the verge of some very exciting things going forward. It is key that the city's growth happen in a well-planned, deliberate manner that will benefit its citizens for generations to come.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I have lived in Seward my whole life and have raised four children here. Seward has a long history of being a city where many caring, generous, community minded people live. It is a place where traditional midwestern values, common sense and personal responsibility are alive and well. All these things make Seward a very safe and wholesome community where human kindness flourishes.

**Why should a businessperson support your election to office?**

Many years in the corporate world and as a small business owner have taught me real-world lessons that can work in local government if implemented properly. I have always supported the many economic development programs that are available to help new and established businesses grow. I believe collaboration between local and state economic development efforts is essential and the city plays a key role in implementing these programs.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Seward has a good balance of retail, commercial, service and industrial businesses, as well as Concordia University. Maintaining this balance while encouraging more opportunities for high-tech businesses is key. Continuing to promote programs such as TIF and LB840 are essential to these efforts.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

Smart growth. The city needs to be one step ahead of future anticipated expansion in housing development, roads, utilities and services by strategically planning ahead and not just reacting to the growth.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Maintaining affordable living costs in the city is key to all economic development efforts. In addition to the economic development efforts previously mentioned, controlling increases in property taxes and utility rates is a key factor in attracting businesses and families to Seward.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

For the last several decades, Seward's annual growth rate has been around 1% per year. This is a sustainable rate that allows for the tax base to expand while building our infrastructure out to meet current and future needs. When city's grow at a slower pace (like Seward's) it allows for the community grow "together" and feel closer. Regardless of where future expansion takes place, I believe we need to maintain a strong, vibrant downtown square by continuing to incentivize businesses to stay.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I believe the wellness center would be a very positive addition to the community and will help attract employers and families to Seward. If the citizens vote in favor of the sales tax increase and the project goes forward, I will make every effort to ensure that the future operational costs are not a burden to the taxpayers.



**Seward City Council – Ward 1  
Kristi Ideus  
Responded 4/20/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

To be a voice for the citizens of Seward on our city council. I spent 15 years volunteering in the Seward Public Schools and other community and county organizations while my sons were in school. Now that my sons are out of the public schools, I feel now is the time to serve the community of Seward.

**Why do you love Seward?**

Seward has been a great place to raise our family. Over the years we have made many friends in the Seward community, and a lot of that is because of Seward's friendly, hometown atmosphere that you don't find in larger towns. We especially enjoy the nice variety of stores for shopping and nice restaurants that offer many different cuisines which you don't always find in smaller towns.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I've been a small business owner for 20 years, and I understand how hard it can be to keep a business going in a small town. I'm eager to listen to business owners with their concerns and suggestions. Our business owners need to feel like they can come to our city council with any concerns whether it's the cost of utilities, property taxes, etc and feel like they're being listened to and not ignored or brushed aside.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

I'll work to communicate with potential new businesses in person, social media, etc, how nice Seward is and work to promote Seward as a town that will gladly welcome new businesses. When new businesses come to town, it's important that our city leaders do everything possible to help promote these new businesses. I'll do this for any type of business whether it be shopping, dining, or industry. Unfortunately right now we see a lot of help wanted signs

around town and in social media posts. When I see these signs and posts I pass the word along to someone I know that is looking for employment and I will continue to do this

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

I'm finding it hard to list just one so I'll list the biggest ones that come to mind. One of the biggest issues our town is currently dealing with is a large childcare shortage and a shortage of childcare workers in the childcare centers in town. We have people that live here in Seward or are looking to move to Seward, and they can't find childcare in our town. This is a big problem because when they can't find childcare here, they find it in other towns which can cause them to move to those other towns so they don't have to commute so far for childcare and their employment. Another big issue is the cost of our utilities. We need to find a way to bring our utility costs down and make it so people can afford to live here. Some people are struggling to make a living, especially the last couple of years when people have lost their jobs or have had their hours cut and have to work 2-3 jobs just to make ends meet. This is one of the biggest issues I hear from people that move here from other towns is that our utilities are a lot higher here than where they lived previously.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

To name a few, helping local businesses find the employment help they need so they can remain open. Find ways to fill the empty spaces in our downtown buildings. What are ways we can promote Seward to be the place to bring new businesses? Find ways to make the cost of living more affordable for people that currently live here or are looking to move here.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

I feel Seward is doing well on growth. We're a smaller town, and that's a big reason a lot of people move here from the larger towns. They don't want the large 10,000 - 15,000+ population size. We're a nice, small town that's close enough to some larger towns for when people need to go there for various reasons. People who live here or moved here chose Seward because they want a nice community where their children can safely play with their friends, ride their bikes around town, and parents don't have to worry about them being in danger. We're a town where we look out for each other and help each other when needed.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

At this time I haven't decided how I will vote on this ballot item. I see both the pros and cons to this project and there are a lot of items to take into account when making this decision. Anything that deals with sales tax or property tax is very important to taxpayers and needs to be carefully considered and is a decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. Personally this is a tough vote for me, but I'm glad this is an issue that will be voted on, and ultimately be a decision that will be up to the citizens of Seward.



**Seward City Council – Ward 1  
Megan Kahler  
Responded 4/20/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I simply have a willing spirit to serve this community. I learned so much working for the Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership (SCCDP), and since I left for a professional opportunity elsewhere, I have missed being involved with the community in many different ways. I'd love the opportunity to serve Seward as a city council representative.

**Why do you love Seward?**

Seward holds a special place in my heart. I am originally from Phoenix and came to Seward to attend Concordia University. I chose Seward and, in turn, Seward chose me. My husband, Dan and I chose to continue our lives here and grow our family. Our friends here in Seward became our new family as well. We have many amenities of a larger community with small town values, a thriving downtown, and excellent schools. I'm proud to be a part of Seward.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I worked with the business community during my time with the SCCDP. It is important for business owners to have an advocate, whether it is simply asking how things are going or making time to discuss pressing issues. I am ready and willing to have a listening ear and open mind to important matters in our community.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Seward is already doing very well in these areas. Our business community is growing with current and new businesses. That isn't to say we don't have growing pains. We have jobs available on a consistent basis and talent recruitment is getting harder all the time. This can start in our schools, sharing next step professional opportunities available in Seward.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

I see housing as a challenge in Seward. We have made great strides in the past several years with the addition of apartment complexes and market-rate housing, but there is a gap. It is extremely difficult to find a home in the \$175,000-\$250,000 range, let alone build a home for less than \$350,000. Unfortunately, the state of our economy in recent years has not helped costs in this industry. However, there are available grants and programs to help subsidize housing efforts to bridge that gap. I would like to learn more about these programs to see if it would be a good fit for Seward.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Quality growth is an all-encompassing priority for Seward as so many facets of our economy are brought together. Seward is fortunate to have forward-thinking leaders who explore the possibilities of the impact of projects down the line. Projects like the potential Seward Wellness Center and the Seward Rail Campus do not happen overnight. These projects take years of planning, research, and meetings with key leaders from the business community and education sector to gauge the potential impact on the community in the long term.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

I believe we are growing at a decent rate. We have much to offer the business community and residents alike. As previously mentioned, our community leaders look to the future to ensure the values of Seward are not compromised with potential change.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I support the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue. This project has been brainstormed, discussed, presented, and pursued in Seward for more than 5 years. There have been many gains and setbacks. I know this facility would be successful. A huge portion of Seward's population consists of families. This center would be the home of youth programs, bringing many people to Seward. Like baseball and softball tournaments currently held here, these visiting teams would buy gas, food and other items, fueling our economy. The committee and city leaders have put in a great deal of time and research into this. If you have any questions or concerns, I urge you to reach out to your city council representative, a wellness center committee member, or city administration.



**Seward City Council – Ward 2  
Dana Nottingham  
Responded 4/21/2022**

### **Why are you running for office?**

It is time for a change. It is time that our city (and cities everywhere) stops depending on federal funding for projects we would otherwise not fund. It is time to stop accepting money with conditions imposing terms and requirements not in the best interest of our community, just for the sake of accepting money. Accepting such funding leads to construction of a “road to nowhere” when actual city streets are full of dangerous and harmful potholes and asphalt bumps (just one example). Many taxpayers complain that the federal government takes too much money, then borrows, prints and spends our nation into increasingly outrageous annual deficits and an unbearable national debt of over \$30 trillion, but then gladly accept any and all funding from that very same government being complained about.

Our federal government has taken control of this entire nation, virtually eliminating local control of any issues. The creature has become greater than the creator. It is time that the creator (we, the people) remembers and takes back control of our lives, our communities and our governance. The federal government has its place, as outlined in the United States Constitution, but its place is not in local matters and issues. Locally, we should control our own schools, our police and fire departments, our courts, our land use, our growth and so much more, without unnecessary intrusion and demands by others.

It is time to remember that “all politics is local” and act accordingly. The most basic and important unit of government should be our families. From there, our cities, our counties and our states. Then, and only then, should the federal government be looked to for those things our states, our cities and counties and our families cannot do.

We have it backwards. It’s time to turn it around to how it should be. We the people of Seward should have a much more significant say in our local issues. This is why I am running for city council. I will listen. I will act reasonably and prudently. I will work to maintain the self-sufficiency that has made Seward one of the best and safest cities in Nebraska!

It is also time for our city and our county to work collaboratively in governing responsibly. I think often counties forget that they represent city residents just as equally as they represent residents of unincorporated areas. We need better cooperation between our city and those other governments that both tax and represent our city residents.

### **Why do you love Seward?**

Seward is an amazing city and community. What a history we have! Seward's history of community and cooperation has become Seward's present. As the "Fourth of July City" we recognize and celebrate our freedom and independence to live and act how we see fit. In Seward, in all our differences, we do just this. We come from different backgrounds, we attend different churches, we study at different schools, we have varying careers, we farm, we ranch, we teach, we build, we sell, we buy. But in all this, we come together in freedom. We love our freedom. We love our independence.

What a future we look forward to. Seward's present can become an amazing future if we all continue to work together to preserve and maintain the culture of kindness and friendliness, cooperation and coordination to better ourselves and support our community. We live in a close-knit community where friends help friends, neighbors help neighbors and businesses help businesses.

Seward is a fun place to live. I cannot go anywhere without seeing people smiling, laughing and enjoying the company of each other.

Seward has been well-maintained. It is an old city with a historic, clean, updated look. It is an amazing place to live and a great place to visit!

We are amazing educators; we are hard-working students; we are dedicated public servants; we are faithful God-fearing families; we are wonderful neighbors; we are strong families.

In hard times and in times of ease, we come together in support of each other.

This is Seward. This is why my family and I love Seward.

### **Why should a business person support your election to office?**

My position concerning government and business is that in most cases, government should get out of the way and allow business professionals and entrepreneurs to do what they do best – run their businesses. Burdensome regulation and taxation diminish the ability of businesses, large and small, to thrive, grow and succeed. As elected representatives, we are entrusted to make decisions that will benefit residents and businesses alike. Sometimes these decisions will be to work hand-in-hand with a business to provide necessary municipal services and incentives; sometimes these decisions will be to just move aside and allow business to thrive.

I will duly consider all proposals to help business and will act very cautiously and carefully when making decisions that could negatively affect, tax or regulate business (whether specific

or more generally). We want our businesses to succeed and we want our residents to feel comfortable patronizing these businesses.

I will be friend, not just to residents, but to businesses that serve our residents.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Like my previous response, sometimes the best answer is to just get out of the way. But as to growth and job creation, I will make sure we do not overburden businesses with excessive and unnecessary requirements. I will make sure that businesses, new and old, are not hindered in their business objectives by city actions not in the best interest of commerce.

I support managed, safe growth. In order for our businesses to thrive, we need a resident base willing to live, work and shop in Seward. In order for our residents to thrive, we need businesses willing to employ locally and provide necessary, affordable products and services our residents are willing and able to patronize.

I will encourage and support efforts to do just this.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

One major issue facing Seward is uncertainty. What does the future hold? Emerging from the pandemic years, we wonder what lies ahead. Will COVID-19 continue to control our lives? Will some new virus take its place? Economic concerns weigh heavily on families these days. Inflation is reportedly at a 40-year high and continues growing with each monthly report. We know, even without such reports, as we shop, buy gasoline and pay our energy bills that we are paying a lot more than 8% more than last year for basic staples and necessities.

However, uncertainty does not have to create fear. If we are prepared for what is to come, we don't have to fear it. We will meet with the confidence any new trial, knowing our families, our churches and our community are strong enough to prevail in times of uncertainty.

I intend to show by example that we can be strong in the face of adversity and trials if we are prepared. I will also use my position on the city council to encourage prudence and self-sufficiency, not just for families, but in all municipal matters.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

The strength of our city lies first and foremost with the strength of our families and residents. We need to assure opportunities to live, work and shop close to home. Our businesses should provide products and services our community needs so more of our spending stays local. Certainly, this is not always possible, but we should work to encourage local offerings and local support. We have a very strong community and our economic priority should be to keep it that way.

A close second is the strength of our businesses. We have some amazing employers, old and new, in our town. For those here now, we need to support them. We should seek to bring more industry and job-creating businesses to our city. The Rail Campus is open and ready for new investment. Let's fill it up! We should not have empty commercial and industrial buildings inside the city. If we have vacancies, a top economic priority should be to fill them.

We can bring new business while still protecting our current employers.

Providing a business-friendly atmosphere is a vital part of creating economic strength in and around Seward. Strong businesses make for a strong community.

Creating and maintaining business opportunities should be a major economic priority in Seward.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Growth is good. Managed growth is better. Maintaining a strong, unique community with this growth is best.

The best way to maintain the close feel of the community is to lead by example. If we like parades, we should participate in parades. If we love the culturally unique musical performances we enjoy each July 4, we should attend and even participate in them. If we enjoy the summer farmer's market, we should shop locally and encourage others to do the same. If we savor our local restaurants, we should support them as often as financially feasible.

When my family moved to Seward seven years ago, we were invited to participate in many cultural and religious events, helping us quickly come to consider Seward our home. It was by the example and invitation of others that we so quickly became a part of the Seward community.

This is how to maintain the close feel of our community, even as new residents continue to move our way.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I support a wellness and recreation center as a desirable addition to our city. Such a facility has the potential to improve the health, fitness and wellness of our city's residents, as well as provide opportunities for community and other events. I do, however, have two large concerns with the current project as it is proposed.

First, I have concerns with the financing of both the construction and operation of the facility.

I am not sold on the imposition of an increased sales tax to fund the project and its operation. The sales tax resolution passed by the city council authorizes the collection of an additional half cent sales tax for “public infrastructure improvement of the City, including a well center to be owned by the city.” If approved, it appears the added sales tax revenue is not limited to the wellness center, but could potentially be used for other improvements and projects. Is this the intent? It certainly is not being sold as the intent of the increased sales tax. Perhaps the resolution and the ballot question could have been better worded to clarify the intent of spending solely on a wellness center.

Further, I have seen in other jurisdictions that when a sales tax is limited to a certain time period is set to expire, government officials eventually begin to advocate for the retention of that tax (or reauthorization if required by law) because “we’re already used to paying this tax so continuing with this tax will not be a burden to anyone.” Sadly, once a new sales tax is in place, city councils and taxpayers alike tend to be more likely to agree to continue that tax, albeit in a new form for a new project, since it has already been collected for years. Who knows what a future city council will seek to finance next or what precedent will be set for future sales tax increases?

A tax is a tax, even if it appears small and insignificant.

Other language regarding the issuance of bonds concerns me. As the question is written, if bonds are issued, the new sales tax will continue until the bonds are paid off. I have heard some say this means that if the bonds are paid off before ten years, the sales tax would end. Perhaps. But, consider this alternative. Perhaps a number of years down the road, a city council decides it wants to add on to or update the facility and decides to issue bonds guaranteed by the same sales tax? The wording of the ballot question is vague enough that bonds could be issued that extend well beyond the ten years currently anticipated. Our ballot question should be much more succinct and precise, so as to not confuse voters. Honestly, I am confused at what really is intended with this ballot question

I am not saying all this will happen, but am suggesting it could and thus creates a concern for me with the actual intent and result of this ballot question.

We also do not have any idea how this facility will be financed once in operation. There remain many questions that still should be answered before we authorize our city to collect additional sales tax for a project (albeit a beneficial project) that may end up requiring more funding than will actually be collected through the sales tax increase or through membership fees.

Second, I am concerned that this facility, to be owned by the city, may not be available to all city residents. Operating the wellness center like the YMCA or other private recreation center will require monthly membership fees. Many families likely will not be able to afford even a reasonable membership fee and thus will be precluded from use of a facility they are helping fund as they shop in the city. I am not convinced this is a fair, reasonable and affordable way to provide wellness and recreation opportunities to all city residents.

Consequently, I have many questions about this project. I support a wellness center, but I think the city council did not adequately consider all the possible issues before approving the May 10 ballot question for the increase of our city sales tax. Or, at least, they have not answered all the questions that need to be answered before asking our residents to approve a tax increase.

Again, a tax is a tax, regardless how big or small it is.

This is one reason I am seeking a seat on the city council – to provide a voice of reason, to help think of all possible options and eventualities, and to help make the city and its services affordable and available to all city residents.



**Seward City Council – Ward 2  
Tatum Tonniges  
Responded 4/21/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I have enjoyed being a part of and leading various clubs and committees related to my sons' activities over the years, and am excited to extend this opportunity to our broader community. It is a great way to continue to give back, create a positive impact, and bring about change that will make a difference to our city and its people. I have a strong work ethic, and will be devoted to interacting with our city's residents, building relationships, and serving as their voice on the topics and issues that are most important to them and their families.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I was born and raised in Seward County, and have lived in the City of Seward for the last 9 years with my 2 sons, Zac (19) and Alex (17). This community and the people therein are important to me and I want to continue to see us all thrive and grow. My family and the people in this community have helped shaped my life and have contributed to my successes both personally and professionally. I am proud of where I came from, and believe in what this small-town Nebraska community has to offer.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I understand the commitment and associated stress that it takes to keep a business running (both personally and financially). I have spent the last 20+ years of my professional career leading people and teams through change, and will be there to support our businesses, listening and engaging with them when they are concerned about issues or change that could impact their livelihood, and ensuring that they have a voice in the decisions that we will make for the City of Seward.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Focusing on our infrastructure is a great start as it prepares us for growth and assures potential businesses and employees that we are dedicated to our city, and have a vision for the future. That focus and development along with our location, great school system, friendly residents, small-town charm, amenities, activities, and celebrations to bring us together, and an ongoing commitment to improve and change with our people and surroundings make us a very attractive city to call home.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

The city is growing, and we need to continue our focus on the infrastructure within our city, both new and improving the existing. We need a strategic approach to both short- and long-term solutions related to our city's infrastructure and development, so that we can limit the associated costs and ensure that the decisions that we make take into consideration our vision and future of the city versus the short-term need or issue.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

A strategic approach to short- and long-term solutions to our city's infrastructure and development and opportunities to bring our community together, promoting businesses and organizations, and amenities that provide convenience and benefits to our overall well-being that allows us to continue to grow and thrive.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

It's imperative to understand what is important to our businesses and residents, and incorporate that into the decisions we make. With growth comes change, and we need to be transparent and share the "why" behind these decisions to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the overall vision and benefit (especially when it is not obvious). We must continue to offer the opportunity and platforms for them to share their ideas and concerns that will help us drive growth and stay connected with one another.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I plan to vote 'Yes'. I have attended informational meetings and visited with Seward residents and committee members to understand why people do or do not support the Wellness Center. The committee has spent time with those businesses that may be negatively impacted to understand any concerns and provide clarity on the questions posed. I have appreciated their transparency during our discussions that have allowed me obtain a holistic view on the topic. The majority of those that I have talked with are excited about the amenities and opportunities it brings to our community.



**Seward City Council – Ward 3  
Gerald Henthorn  
Responded 4/20/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I'm not satisfied with what I'm seeing at all levels of government.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I moved to Nebraska from the Washington D.C. area around 30 years ago. Seward is peaceful, clean, and the people are level headed.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I understand that business is what keeps things going. Government should keep its hands off private businesses as much as possible.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

I don't have a big overall plan. I will say that I won't encourage the city to enter into business enterprises, and tax its constituents for any aspect of that business, which are better suited for the open market.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

From my perspective, we have a labor shortage.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Attracting a larger labor pool.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

I'm not sure how to go about it, but I think we should encourage small business growth, as well as encourage larger enterprises to move into the area. The feel of the community will be what it will be organically.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue?  
Please explain your reasoning.**

No.



**Seward City Council – Ward 3  
Ann Underwood  
Responded 4/19/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I decided to run for City Council, Ward 3 because Seward has been good to my husband and I, and it is time for me to give back to my community. I believe the taxpayers in the City of Seward deserve more transparency and accountability from our city government. I believe the City of Seward can do a much better job planning and following through with developing infrastructure. And most importantly, the taxpayers in our community deserve to be acknowledged and heard.

As your council representative, I will be looking for ways to make Seward more efficient. I believe governments should run as a business, and elected officials should never, ever forget who is paying the bills. Working towards higher fiscal accountability will also help Seward become a more affordable place to live.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I believe Seward is unique in many ways. We are home to a fantastic university, awesome medical facilities, beautiful parks, and a historic and beautiful downtown square. We have a bike path, swimming pool, golf course, and a library other similar sized communities should be jealous of. We are blessed to be able to live the small-town, rural life with many of the bigger city amenities at our fingertips.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I have 30 years of experience running and managing 3 businesses simultaneously and successfully with my husband. I am pro-growth when it comes to the Seward Community and protecting the downtown business district. However, I also believe a reasonable balance between the cost to implement and the benefit to the taxpayers must be measured and maintained. My business experiences have taught me how to review and analyze a budget and how make projections based on historical income and expenses. I know how to look at what is in front of me today and apply it to long term goals.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Seward is in an excellent position right now, and we have some fascinating things coming up on the horizon. But the city's growth must happen in a well-planned, fiscally responsible manner that will benefit rather than burden its citizens for generations to come. I strongly support assisting the downtown business/property owners in enhancing the feel as well as the reality of a well-cared for and thriving community. It takes a village to raise child, as they say, and I plan to get to know the Seward County Chamber & Development Partnership staff, the City of Seward staff, the County Commissioners, and many others on a first name basis. I believe developing programs that support current and well-established businesses in their continued success is also vital to the success of a community.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

The number one immediate issue facing Seward is a lack of workforce. Due to the events that have taken place over the last two years most all employers I've been in contact with are desperate to find employees who will show up for work once hired. This problem isn't unique to Seward, however. In 2021, both quitting rates and job openings hit record highs in the United States, and with technology and remote work giving people more options for opportunity than ever, businesses looking to hire have found they need to up their game. But that can cost money that the business does not have to spare. A very close second issue facing Seward is the lack of daycare opportunities for our residents. There is a waiting list for all ages, but it seems the list is especially long for the infant to 6-yearold age groups. I am aware of instances where a business hired someone from out-of-town and the person ended up having to decline the position due to not being able to find daycare for their children. I believe the lack of daycare opportunities is having a negative impact on Seward's growth.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Seward's top economic priority needs to be the solving of the traffic issues on E. Seward Road, North Columbia Ave, East out of Seward on Hwy 34, Hwy 15 north and south through town, and getting traffic from Hwy 34 north to Waverly Road. And a very close second needs to be focusing on what needs to be done to attract quality workforce.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Continuing to support programs such as TIF, LB840, and downtown improvement projects, are important. However, to continue to receive support from the community for these types of programs, the city needs to continue to educate the community on how they benefit the community because people tend to forget. Job creation, productivity growth, income equality, and increasing the net income of the citizens which increases their quality of life, are all central factors in being a competitive city. In today's world, cities of all sizes are competing for talent, investments, businesses, events, and tourists. I believe Seward needs to develop a second brand (in conjunction with 4th of July City and not in place of it), that promotes a

strong link between the perceived image of Seward and our ability to rise above the competition.

**Do you plan to vote ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue?  
Please explain your reasoning.**

I am still evaluating the information I’ve received in the last few weeks. I am in pursuit of answers to some questions I have about the projected cost to build the facility and the proposed budget to operate the facility once open. I am concerned about the ability to adequately staff the facility, especially due to the current serious staffing issues. And even though I fully agree that adding a Wellness Center into the mix of so many other benefits our community offers would be great for our community, I would much prefer the cost to build and or to operate would not be covered in part by an increase in taxes of any kind. Therefore, I have not decided on how I will vote yet.



**Seward City Council – Ward 3  
Rich Wergin  
Responded 4/18/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I have a strong passion for helping others. As a new retiree, I will have time to fully engage in the work of the City Council. I will use my experience as a member of various boards and committees even having held the position of treasurer for a term. I have experience in working with others to resolve issues. I have the time needed to prepare for meetings. As a Ward 3 city council representative, I will help the City preserve those services that citizens of Seward have shared are most important to them.

**Why do you love Seward?**

After more than thirty years of teaching and coaching in Seward Schools and another twelve years as an advocate for members of the Nebraska State Education Association, I have made the decision to retire this fall here. Seward is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. What more can I say?

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I will use my people skills and experience in support of the businesses we already have while encouraging development of a plan to attract new businesses to our community. Investing in Seward's business community through state and federal grants and outside funding sources is a proven way of controlling spending and reducing property taxes for the community. Growing the economic possibilities in Seward is clearly a continuing priority for the City.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

A plan to partner with the Memorial Health Care System, the Chamber of Commerce, the Fourth of July Committee, Seward Public Schools and Concordia University to promote the Community of Seward throughout the year on every social media platform is the best

approach to address this question. Using a team approach, leaders from each group working together will maximize the potential of each group's investment.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

Seward is a growing community. This is a good problem to have. How are we going to pay for it? Controlling spending and reducing property taxes and rental costs are issues that need to be addressed. As we add new families, new businesses, there are often stresses on infrastructure. Seward is fortunate to have a progressive plan in place to meet the demand for residential housing and building sites for new businesses.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

Property taxes and rental costs in the Seward area are too high. Citizens of Seward are asking that the members of the City Council keep them informed of their plans to reduce spending and to share actions underway that may lead to meeting this goal. There is a need for brainstorming ideas and considering what has worked to reduce taxes and spending in other similar sized communities.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Seward's Planning and Zoning Commission has done an excellent job advising the City council with a comprehensive plan. This has led to new developments of the community that have been structured to maintain the neighborhood concept. These new developments have been well received with homes moving quickly in this market. The plan needs to be able to expand as the indicators of the community's population changes and the need for additional housing grows.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I need more time to spend on gathering specific information before casting my vote on the Seward Wellness Center. I have yet to see the specific numbers as well as projections of expenses for the short and long term. I hope to have these answers soon.



**Seward City Council – Ward 4  
Karl Miller  
Responded 4/12/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I am running for the office of City Council for Ward 4 as an incumbent, so I am running to continue working for the betterment of the city as it continues to grow and maintain tremendous potential for future growth and investment for the people of the city.

**Why do you love Seward?**

I feel that the city is a great place, a great community, and holds tremendous opportunity for growth into the future.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

I would like to think that during my time on the City Council and being a part of various committees such as LB840 has shown me to be a proponent for the opportunity of private enterprise with minimal interference from the governing body.

**How will you plan to make Seward a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

To make the city as job-friendly and attractive to businesses it is my aim to see that we get the most efficient use from the tax dollars of the people and to work toward a balance between the maintenance of current programs of the city but also planned expansion in anticipated growth.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Seward?**

I feel the number one issue currently facing Seward is growth. In which growth is a good issue to be facing in the way of defining how we want to grow as a city and what that may look like in the future. But growth also provides challenges with the costs associated with the

expansion of necessary infrastructure to sustain current growth while also providing the capacity of future growth for the city.

**What should be Seward's top economic priorities?**

As a city I believe that the top economic priorities of the city should be the consistency and efficiency in the services that it provides, as well as fostering an economic environment that positions the city for potential growth of businesses and attract new businesses.

**What is your perspective on Seward's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Seward stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

My perspective on Seward's growth is that it should be considered a positive aspect of the city and that it truly is up to the people to maintain, develop, and foster the relationships that make Seward have the close feeling of a small community as the city continues to grow.

**Do you plan to vote 'Yes' or 'No' for the Seward Wellness Center sales tax ballot issue? Please explain your reasoning.**

I believe that the Seward Wellness Center provides a great opportunity, not only for the people of Seward but also the county, to have such an amenity available and at a greatly reduced cost due to the dedicated work of the committee in finding available grant funding but also to the outstanding support and commitment of private donors. I will be voting 'Yes' on May 10th in support of the Seward Wellness Center sales tax initiative.



**Milford City Council – Ward 2**  
**Tony DeLong**  
**Responded 4/24/2022**

**Why are you running for office?**

I am vested in Milford with a passion for service. With purposeful action, I will work strategically to uncover, and to discover, a common vision to move us forward. I will focus on specific, measurable and achievable results to execute items needed for Milford’s strategic plan.

**Why do you love Milford?**

I wanted a place where my family could call home, a place where they could thrive and become the people they were meant to be. Milford made that a reality for me.

**Why should a business person support your election to office?**

Communities can grow by choice or chance. Abraham Lincoln used to say that “the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself.” A big part of this creation is supporting local businesses. I want to be a part of a team that works towards supporting local businesses, and diligently working to create opportunities for new businesses.

**How will you plan to make Milford a more jobs-friendly community and attract businesses and employees to our area?**

Simple recipe...

Step 1: Create opportunities for people to move to Milford.  
Jobs follow people. A majority of business owners establish residence in a community first, and then start a business. Step one is to help create

Step 2: Help develop revitalization programs to improve the function and image of distressed, degraded or underutilized areas. The ultimate goal is to support economic resurgence and to catalyze new investment and economic activity. In selecting a location to live, the most highly

considered factor for business owners and community members is the overall quality of the community.

**What is the number one issue currently facing Milford?**

Infrastructural needs. From affordable housing to wireless internet.

**What should be Milford's top economic priorities?**

Continue to invest in Milford's infrastructure; physical infrastructure is an interconnected, intrinsic component of strong communities.

**What is your perspective on Milford's growth? In other words, how would you ensure Milford stays competitive while maintaining the close feel of the community?**

Over recent decades, cities have become job centers that attract people away from rural communities. However, Milford has many items working in its favor: Milford is close to job hubs, and people want to live in areas that provide green space. So how does Milford capitalize on its advantages, attract new residents, and retain community members? Provide a lifestyle and activities that people seek in communities; amenities are there to provide members of the neighborhood an overall sense of community.