

January 12, 2005

Dear Citizen of Collegedale,

My name is Harry L. Hodgdon and I am a candidate for Collegedale City Commissioner in the March 1 election. When I learned that I was the only person who had chosen to challenge the three incumbents I was, quite frankly, aghast. I do not believe that any of the incumbents have done such an outstanding job that they deserve to be unchallenged for a second term.

I am not even going to attempt to make this letter brief. I want you, my fellow citizens, to understand who I am, what I believe, and why I believe it, as pertains to my values and my vision of government; not just on the local level, but on the state and federal level as well. If my personal values seem, at times to conflict with my political positions, it is because I respect the rights of those who disagree with me and choose different life-styles from the one I have chosen.

My format for this paper is going to be to state the ISSUE and my position on the ISSUE, and then follow it with a section labeled **DISCUSSION**. I will conclude this document with some **GENERAL COMMENTS**.

ISSUE

I am opposed to forcing property owners who are not now within city limits to join the city.

DISCUSSION

I believe it was in 2003 that a couple who owned a business near Lee Highway pleaded with the Commission in Public Hearing not to annex them into the city. The Commission did not heed their pleas and annexed them anyway. I am opposed to annexing anyone whether they own a business, a home, a farm, or just vacant land if they do not request annexation or oppose annexation. I consider forcing someone into the city to be a violation of the Golden Rule. The inverse is not necessarily true, however. I would not necessarily vote to annex someone who simply requested it. My vote would depend on many circumstances.

ISSUE

I am opposed to any change in zoning that would allow for the issuance of more beer sales licenses. Can all of the present incumbents be counted on to oppose such a change? Better check!

DISCUSSION

The City of Collegedale has never voted to issue a beer sales license. For those who may be new to our community, the two businesses that currently sell beer were grandfathered in several years ago. I personally do not use alcoholic beverages. I have no problem with a person buying alcoholic beverages outside the city, and bringing them into the city to use in the privacy of their own homes. However, I believe the citizens in a particular local governmental entity ought to be able to show their preference by making it a bit inconvenient to get these products, or if a majority take the opposite view, by allowing the sale of these products.

Now, I am not trying to shock anyone. What would be the point in that when I am seeking to be elected to public office? However, I favor the legalization of marijuana and that it be publicly sold as a controlled substance like tobacco and alcohol. I personally have never tried marijuana and have no plans to do so. However, were it legalized, I would oppose its sale in Collegedale. I personally do not use tobacco products. However, were it allowed, I would not approve the sale of tobacco products in Collegedale. I hope that everyone can see that there is a consistency in my thinking.

I am not choosing to discuss in this letter just why I believe marijuana should be legalized. But I would be happy to discuss this issue with anyone who would like to discuss it with me. I also want to make it clear that as a Commissioner I would support our police department in their enforcement of federal drug laws. But, I also want to make it clear that I consider some of these laws to be very, very, bad laws.

ISSUE

Bicycle safety in Collegedale. I support the development of a comprehensive system of bicycle trails and routes in Collegedale, including marked bike lanes on certain public roads.

DISCUSSION

About three years ago a study was done throughout Hamilton County directed towards the establishment of an integrated system of bicycle routes and trails for the County, that would allow people to travel safely on a bicycle to every corner of our County. Things were even discussed such as having bicycle racks on Chattanooga buses. This would enable a Collegedale resident, for instance, who worked in Chattanooga to ride his or her bicycle to the outskirts of Chattanooga, and then take a bus the rest of the way to work.

The meetings for our area were held at Collegedale City Hall. Though I did not own a bicycle at the time, and still don't, I attended all of the meetings including the final meeting where decisions were made. None of the Commissioners at that time (which included the three incumbents in this election) attended any of the meetings, though they were publicly invited. Chattanooga now has a number of bike routes and bike lanes. Collegedale has nothing; and our city manager tells me that there are no plans, that she knows of, for Collegedale to ever do anything.

It does my heart good to see a young family (Mom, Dad, and the children) out riding their bicycles on a weekend, or a warm summer evening. I have also observed that many children ride their bikes to school, and at least a few adults who work locally ride their bikes to work. But, often they are compelled to ride under the most unsafe conditions. I believe that bicyclists deserve to have at least one Commissioner who will speak for them and promote their cause. I am ready to be that Commissioner.

ISSUE

Lower property taxes. I believe that at the present rate of assessment we can significantly lower the tax rate. This interprets as more than just three cents in four years which is the record of the last two Commissions.

DISCUSSION

The record of the Commission on this issue has not been terrible (especially when compared with some other cities). I just believe we can do better.

I worked at a very innovative private day school many years ago. One of its objectives was to show that a private school could be operated at the same per pupil cost as did public schools in that state. We succeeded in our objective while at the same time providing a very high quality education.

Several years later I became the treasurer of a church. In the autobiography I published in 1998, I related what a church board member of that church said about me at a board meeting. "It's so nice having you as our church treasurer, Harry. For years this church couldn't afford anything. Now we can afford everything." In my book, I continue with the comment that I was a bit amused because this member made it sound like I was printing money in the church basement, or something.

So what was my secret? I simply used better management of available reserves, while at the same looking for (and finding), previously untapped sources of funds. This was a Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Conference auditor was so impressed with the careful way I followed Conference policy, **WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BEING INNOVATIVE**, that he asked me to write out what I was doing, so he could share it with all the other churches in that Conference. I also created a new format for the financial reports to the church board. Several board members, who had been on the board for years, remarked that for the first time even they could understand the church's finances. I have no degree in bookkeeping or accounting. Maybe that helped me to make the reports more understandable to the average person.

Now a city is not a school or a church. The parameters are different. Still, I believe my experience would be useful in working with the Commission and City government to see if we cannot do things better and save taxpayers money.

ISSUE

No vote for people who are not city residents. I am opposed to allowing property owners who are not residents to vote in municipal elections.

DISCUSSION

This is not the South before the Civil War. It is not Colonial America. It is not France before the French Revolution. It is not Seventeenth Century England when there was still a powerful, privileged, landed aristocracy. This is Twenty-First Century America.

For nonresident property owners to get a vote in Collegedale required a special act of the Tennessee legislature, which one of the incumbents promoted and lobbied for. The reason this required a special act of the legislation is because the whole concept is so archaic and undemocratic. I believe that every American citizen should have one vote, and only one vote, and that vote should be cast in the place of their primary residence. This successful effort on the part of the incumbents to dilute the vote of Collegedale residents in the control of their own city is, in my opinion, outrageous.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Collegedale grew up around its schools. Personally, I love living in a community with so many children, teenagers, and university students. My vision for this city has always been that it be a welcoming place for college students, and a wholesome, safe place for parents to raise children. A couple of years ago I was chatting with the young couple who lived in the apartment next to mine. This couple were in their mid-twenties. The wife was a recent graduate of Southern and the husband was still taking classes. Somehow we got on the subject of people's ages. I mentioned that I had just turned sixty-one. "You are in your sixties," said the wife, "but you look so young, and you act so young, and you think just like we young people do." I thought that was one of the nicest compliments I have ever received.

Recently one of the incumbents in this election complained about a home in Collegedale. He said there were too many cars parked in the yard. Well that was one of MY neighbors he complained about. The homes in OUR neighborhood may not be as stately as those in that Commissioner's neighborhood. Lawns may not be quite as carefully manicured. Some of MY neighbors may not be able to afford a lawn service to keep everything looking absolutely perfect. Besides, some of MY neighbors have small children. But to the best of my knowledge we all get along and are happy in OUR neighborhood. **SO WHY IS THIS COMMISSIONER BUTTING IN?** It is not the first time, nor is he the only Commissioner, to want to interfere in someone else's neighborhood, when no one in that neighborhood has any complaints.

For over two years at almost every Commission meeting, one Commissioner or another would complain about how our police department was harassing citizens. Now the Commissioners have become the harassers. If I were on the Commission, I would not dream of involving myself in the affairs of these Commissioners' neighborhoods, unless a resident of that neighborhood had a complaint. And even then, I would involve the city only if it was clearly proper to do so.

The two Commissioners elected in 2003, Bill Hulsey and John Turner, tend to be unifiers, who, in my view, take reasonable, appropriate positions, and are willing to negotiate on difficult, complex issues. The three incumbents elected in 2001 tend to be combative and become very disagreeable if they don't get exactly their own way on all things. I want to change the dynamics of our Commission in ways that will enable more citizens to feel truly good about our city.

Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy in the March 1 election.

Very Sincerely,

Harry L Hodgdon
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423-396-3902

Please call and leave your name, address, and phone number if you would like to discuss any issues, or if you would accept one of my yard signs.