

Colorado Springs Mayor Candidate Survey

Date: **03.02.23**

Name: **Wayne Williams**

Office: **Mayor**

1. Do you support or oppose the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR)? Feel free to comment on projects you would support using TABOR refunds for —i.e., subsidized housing, parks, pothole repair, etc. (200 words maximum)

**I support the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights passed by Colorado voters. Taxpayers, not government, should decide when it is appropriate for taxes to be increased. When existing revenue is not enough to fund essential services, it is both proper and necessary to ask the taxpayers for permission for additional funding.**

**As an elected official, I have referred several ballot measures, including creating the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority. That measure ensured accountability through audits and citizen oversight, limited overhead to less than 1%, and guaranteed specific projects. We delivered what we promised, and our citizens just renewed the PPRTA with 79.4% of the vote.**

**As mayor I will work first to ensure that we are efficiently using the funds we receive. In appropriate circumstances, I will support referring measure to the citizens seeking their permission.**

**With respect to votes on TABOR refunds, I supported the citizens' ability to vote on TABOR retentions for (1) funding police and firefighters for public safety, (2) establishing an ongoing fire mitigation fund to protect our community from wildfire, and (3) making capital improvements in several parks. Each was adopted by the voters.**

2. Do you believe private companies should deliver goods and services to consumers and businesses? Or, should government funded enterprises be involved, such as Municipal Broadband? Please explain. (250 words maximum)

**Our Colorado Springs residents deserve a city government that is a responsible steward of taxpayer funds. Part of that may include outsourcing certain city services, provided that it is cost-effective and a high standard of work product is maintained. For example, when we created the Pikes Peak RTA, we intentionally chose to allocate most funding to outside contractors. Certain services, however, including most public safety functions, should be performed by city employees.**

**As wise stewards of public funds, government should look to public-private partnerships to minimize taxpayer and ratepayer costs in appropriate circumstances.**

**For example, we have leased excess capacity on our fiber lines for many years, which reduces costs to ratepayers. As Colorado Springs Utilities expands its fiber network to permit more robust information sharing with our customers, it makes sense to defray the cost by leasing excess capacity to private enterprises, some of which may choose to sell private broadband services.**

**In 2017, 61% of Colorado Springs voters approved permitting the city to provide high-speed internet directly to consumers or to partner or coordinate with private enterprise to do so. I favor working with private enterprise to do this rather than providing municipal broadband.**

3. Do you support “road-dieting” traffic lanes in favor of bike lanes and bus lanes in Colorado Springs? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

**No. Traffic congestion is an issue in our city and reducing the number of lanes available for cars generally would only exacerbate the problem. If adding bike lanes to new or existing roads is feasible, I'd be supportive, but not at the expense of car lanes.**

4. Do you support a study to explore expanding Constitution Avenue? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

**Two decades ago, the members then on City Council punted this issue for 20 years instead of resolving the matter.**

**I believe that there are significant neighborhood concerns that would need to be addressed with respect to expanding Constitution or any other corridor in the developed area of the city. We do need increased east-west mobility and a study of other alternatives and stakeholder engagement will allow us to weigh that need against critical environmental and neighborhood impacts.**

**On February 28, I voted to adopt ConnectCOS with the Constitution extension removed from the study. While I disagreed with some of the technical wording of the amendment that removed the extension from the study, I supported the final document because it did not punt the issue.**

5. The Colorado Springs Red Light Camera Program has expanded over the past several years. Will you continue to support the expansion of the program or will you discontinue it? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

**Red light cameras should never be installed to gain revenue. Instead, they should be used to protect the safety of the traveling public. If there were an intersection at which red light cameras were necessary for public safety, I would support their use. Similarly, if there were an intersection at which they were not necessary I would support discontinuing their use. The length of a yellow light should not be shortened to trigger more violations.**

6. Will you support taxpayer-funded Front Range Rail? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

**I have doubts about the economic feasibility of Front Range Rail and question whether our residents would use it. Taxpayer funding should only occur if the taxpayers affirmatively vote for the funding in a November election.**

7. How do you plan to ensure public safety with an understaffed police department? (250 words maximum)

**Maintaining public safety will be one my top priorities as mayor. In my four years on City Council, we have provided funding for an additional 62 police officers. It is also anticipated that our city will need add 200 more police officers by 2035 to keep up with our growth.**

**Like most major cities, Colorado Springs has struggled to fill our available police positions, but we are making progress. We have moved to a continuous year-round police academy and are reducing the waiting time before a new class starts.**

**As mayor, I will make sure that we're competitive in the recruitment process, but we will always ensure our high standards are met. I will always ensure that our police, firefighters and other first responders know how much we appreciate them and respect their service.**

**In addition, I have supported shifting certain functions to other appropriate agencies. As a member of City Council, I supported moving long-term parking violations from our police department to code enforcement. This allows our POST-certified officers to concentrate on critical public safety issues.**

8. The Martin Drake Coal Power Plant was decommissioned 9 years earlier than required. Was that the correct decision? Please explain. (200 words maximum)

**Yes, the closure saved ratepayers money. As Chairman of the Colorado Springs Utilities Board, I've been actively working on making necessary upgrades to our power grid to ensure that it is reliable, clean and safe from attack.**

**Drake was built in the 1920s, and its design was old, inefficient and required both an extensive number of personnel and a long lead time of more than a day to reach peak capacity. We replaced Drake with natural gas power generation that is more cost-effective and can rapidly adjust to varying consumer demand. These changes reduced costs to consumers - even with the increased volatility of natural gas prices. As reported in the Gazette, compared to other Front Range utilities, Colorado Springs Utilities customers have electric rates that are 19% lower than average and natural gas rates 23% lower than average.**

**In addition to being more economical, Drake's closure will enable Colorado Springs Utilities to meet state-mandated emission reductions that go into effect in two years.**

9. What expenditures in the Colorado Springs City budget can be reduced or eliminated? As our future Mayor, will you commit to those reductions? Please explain. (250 words maximum)

**Colorado Springs is one of the nation's most efficiently run cities. We operate on far less per citizen than any other comparable city in Colorado. As I have for each budget, I will ensure the budget is balanced and funds our critical priorities. In doing that, I will work closely with our city finance team and department directors and seek input from key stakeholders like our firefighters and police officers.**

10. What would you consider responsible growth in Colorado Springs? Examples might include infill, expansion to the east, annexation, etc. (200 words maximum)

**I have successfully championed road and water infrastructure projects, including the widening of I-25 and the Pikes Peak RTA and the establishment of new water and public safety fees on developers. Growth should pay its own way - new development must be accompanied by the necessary infrastructure to sustain it. As mayor, I will continue to fight to ensure we have adequate transportation systems, utilities, fire and police stations, and that we provide the other services needed for a growing city.**

**Our annexation policy should be based on what is best for the residents of Colorado Springs. This means that areas should be annexed only if we have sufficient excess capacity for utilities. With respect to water, I've worked to add additional water resources and helped lead the fight to replace the vague "foreseeable future" standard with a new ordinance guaranteeing a 128% buffer before allowing new annexations to occur.**

**We also must ensure that the cost of providing utilities, public safety, and other services in the area proposed for annexation is covered by the revenue the city will receive from that area.**

11. What is your plan to tackle the issues that come with a growing homeless population? (250 words maximum)

**Colorado Springs is one of the few large cities in America where the number of unhoused homeless have been reduced. We must compassionately address the root causes of homelessness by working with non-profit partners like Springs Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, and Catholic Charities to provide education and treatment options for those experiencing drug addiction and/or mental illness.**

**For the health and safety of the public, we need to continue to enforce our city ordinances that prohibit camping on, and potentially contaminating, our public spaces and waterways and prohibit individuals from blocking public rights-of-way**

**and building entrances. As a member of City Council, I supported the successful expansion of our ordinance providing this protection. On Council I've worked to ensure our ability to enforce these rules by having sufficient beds available.**

**We also need to expand our Homeless Outreach Team and Community and Alternate Response Teams to meet the needs of our community.**

12. Optional: Anything else you want voters to know about what you would do if elected? (200 words maximum)

**As a 30-year resident of Colorado Springs, I've seen our great city go through many changes. My wife, Holly, and I raised our four amazing children here, and I've worked to serve our community. My mission as mayor will be to ensure that through community collaboration, Colorado Springs continues the progress we've made over the last eight years and that we remain the very best city to live, work and raise our families.**

**As the only candidate with elected executive experience, I have a proven track record of accomplishment and leadership at both the local and state level – tackling problems effectively and efficiently with customer service that was “invariably helpful and cheerful.”**

**I serve on Colorado Springs City Council and Chair Colorado Springs Utilities. Previously, I served as Colorado Secretary of State, County Clerk and Recorder and County Commissioner. I was named “Leader of Democracy” by League of Women Voters and “Regional Leader of the Year” by Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC because of the work I've done.**

**I have a demonstrated ability to work across the aisle, empower and retain employees, and possess the even temperament and integrity necessary to be a highly effective mayor for our great city.**