Dave Donelson District 1

1. What motivated you to run for a City Council seat, and what is your vision for serving the public if elected?

I am running for reelection to continue to be a strong representative for the citizens of District 1, and really the entire city. In a recent letter to the editor in the Gazette, I was referred to as "the honorable Dave Donelson, Councilman for the people." I don't take developer money - my opponent does. My leadership on issues such as writing and passing the Resolution declaring that Colorado Springs is not, and will not become, a Sanctuary City; the Resolution (in 2022) opposing recreational marijuana sales in Colorado Springs (which voters rejected), and proposing to allow citizens to vote on a building height limit for downtown Colorado Springs is important. There are many other issues I have also led on, including writing an ordinance with CSPD, and the City Attorney Office (CAO) to stop human trafficking in massage therapy businesses in Colorado Springs; and opposing eliminating LART funding for Heritage events like the Western Street Breakfast, and Parade of Lights, while increasing by 50% funding for the "Pride" Festival and Parade. My vision for serving the public is to accurately reflect their will on City Council.

2. Nationally, government has been focused on finding waste and fraud in government through DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency. Would you be in favor of a similar effort within the City of Colorado Springs? Where do you think efficiencies could be found within city departments?

Yes, I would. Within the Mayor's office.

3. Are there any new taxes, fees, or TABOR retention ballot issues you'd like to see put before voters? Please, explain.

No.

4. What does responsible city growth and development look like to you? Do you have any issues with how City Council has handled development, annexation, etc. in the recent past?

The answer here is a combination of logical extensions of the city boundary combined with infill. We have a large part of our current city footprint which is yet to be built out - Banning Lewis Ranch (BLR). Wastewater infrastructure is the limiting factor at the moment and that is being addressed. That will allow BLR to be developed. That will bring thousands of homes into the market.

City council also often hears land use items involving infill projects. These can be controversial when large high density apartment buildings are proposed adjacent to single family neighborhoods or along evacuation chokepoints. Council has to do a good job of balancing the need for more apartments with the concerns of neighborhoods.

To do a good job we need timely and accurate data. We need to have accurate demographic data and trends. How fast is our population in the county and city growing? It seems to be slowing. There are currently more than 6,000 apartment units available for rent in Colorado Springs on apartments.com. Thousands more are in the pipeline and will come to the market this year.

5. Should non-profit entities receive taxpayer funds to provide services to certain sectors of the public? Would you advocate for those non-profits to provide detailed reports to city council on how taxpayer money is spent?

In some cases yes. For example, the Springs Rescue Mission (SRM) receives $500,000 annually from the city. They provide food, shelter, and other services to "homeless" individuals. The fact that there are beds for the "homeless" in Colorado Springs allows us to enforce our No Camping ordinances in the city. Without those beds available courts have ruled that cities can't enforce their No Camping ordinances.

Yes, there should be accurate accounting for funds distributed by the city.

6. In 2024, the current city council members voted in favor of a resolution stating that Colorado Springs is not a sanctuary city. Do you agree or disagree with that vote and why?

Not only do I agree with it - I wrote it. I also then gathered support on Council to get it passed. I had to water it down. For example, where I had written "illegal aliens" in the original version it was changed to "migrants." It still only passed on a 6-3 vote. There were three on Council who still wouldn't support even the watered down version. They are Councilwomen Henjum (running for reelection) and Avila (termed out), and Talarico (not running for reelection).

Months later we were told by a reporter from the Denver Gazette who had been to our border, that illegal aliens who entered the United States illegally were given a piece of paper with two lists of cities — those to go to, and those to stay away from. Colorado Springs was on the list to stay away from. She told us that was because of the Resolution we passed declaring we are not, and won't become a Sanctuary City.

Control of our borders is the most important issue facing the United States. We must have complete control of our borders.

7. What is your view on the current illegal immigration problem in our city?

Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) and all other city departments should fully cooperate with federal immigration enforcement efforts to arrest and deport all illegal aliens in our city. What the exact scope of the problem is I don't know — and the state has passed laws which restrict local police departments from asking people they are in contact with about their "immigration status." I have been frustrated to find out that CSPD, and our city does not keep data on the citizenship status of individual committing crimes. Because

of this we really don't have good data. I am for gathering that data, and as I said above, deporting everyone who entered the country, or has remained in the country, illegally.

8. Taxpayer funds are used to provide services to homeless people. Do you think this money is well spent (or not) and should more funds be (or not be) committed to homeless programs?

Recently, city council expanded the "NO Sit/Lie" ordinance to include the east side of South Nevada. This gives CSPD another tool to use to keep the "homeless" from laying around on sidewalks and in front of stores in this part of town during the day.

In an imperfect world, where our court system has made dealing with mentally ill or addicted people increasingly difficult, one of the best things we can do is to ensure that Colorado Springs is not the most "attractive" city for the homeless. If the "homeless" want, or will accept help, we will be there (through various programs and organizations like the Springs Rescue Mission). If they don't, then we will be the least convenient city in Colorado in which to live in the parks and on the streets.

I don't believe spending large amounts of money on the homeless is the answer. If it was, then cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles would not be in such an awful situation with the "homeless."

9. Housing affordability has been a hot topic in recent years. What's your solution to the problem? Should taxpayer funds be used to address this issue?

Housing affordability is impacted by a lot of factors — many of which are not in City Council's control. Interest rates, the cost of construction materials, the cost of labor, these are just three examples of things that are having a big impact on the increasing cost of housing. This is a national problem — not just Colorado Springs or El Paso County.

There are some factors that are local. The cost of fees and permits for home construction. Zoning which may limit where and what kinds of housing can be built. Local taxes on construction materials. Council should frequently reevaluate these and make sure they cannot be improved.

There are also regulations and requirements coming from the state which are driving up the cost of housing. Extremely high energy efficiency standards, and other green energy new build requirements from the state drive up housing costs. Construction defect liability for builders has essentially stopped the construction of entry level housing such as condominiums. Colorado Springs needs to work through our lobbyists and El Paso County legislative delegation to improve the regulations and requirements.

We should set an attractive environment for construction — but use minimal taxpayer funds to address the issue.

10. Red light cameras and speed cameras have been approved by city council members. What are your opinions about red light cameras and speed cameras?

I voted against the speed cameras because they will be moved around the city so will only be in an area for a short period of time. The fine for speeding will be $40. No points will be assessed to the driver's license. I'm not convinced it will change behavior, and will be a small penalty for wealthier citizens, but can cause real financial problems for poorer citizens. Because there are not points assessed I think there is a fairness issue with this kind of penalty. The points would impact all citizens equally — but a $40 penalty will impact the poor much more severely.

Red light cameras at intersections where there have been deaths and frequent collisions due to citizens running the light have some data behind them showing they change behavior. Citizens learn where the cameras are and know if they run the light they will be ticketed. The pictures of the vehicle running the light are reviewed by a CSPD officer. If it close they err on the side of not ticketing. If the data shows that accidents and deaths are reduced at specific intersections I support their use at those intersections.

11. Is there anything additional you'd like to share about yourself with voters?

I am a former US Army Green Beret, Iraq War Combat Veteran, and the current Colorado Springs District 1 City Councilman. I am also the current Chair of the Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) Board of Directors, and was recently unanimously elected to be the President of the El Paso County Board of Health.

During my first four years on council I have also served as the vice-chair of the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), secretary of the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), and a member of many other committees to include Lodging and Rental Tax (LART), Stormwater, and Audit.

My wife Holly and I will celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary this year. We arrived in Colorado Springs in 1991 two weeks after the birth of our daughter. It was our first assignment in the Army. We raised our son and daughter in Colorado Springs.

I grew up in an Air Force Family and my father was a Security Police NCO. Before the Army I worked as a trail crewman and then as a Wilderness Guard in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana. After the Army I was a Physician Assistant and Center Director of a men's health center.