

Linda Watkins:

1. What role, if any, do you feel the city council has in supporting business enterprise in Carlton?

Business and government are always interdependent – each needs help from the other. Any government body – including a city council – is responsible to the businesses in its jurisdiction: to ensure that all infrastructure services are present and running smoothly (i.e: water, electric, sewer, streets and sidewalks), and that everyone is treated fairly. In Carlton, these services are overseen by city council. Unfortunately, the council seems to have been making decisions about such services and costs with little input from our businesses. Instead, water and sewer costs keep rising to unusual levels. As I have talked with people around the city, many Carltonians tell me they're considering moving out of town simply due to water/sewer prices.

The council must encourage business development in the city, making Carlton an attractive and desirable place for businesses to locate. We can do this through measured, thoughtful and planned growth instead of, as in recent months, allowing outside developers to call the shots without consideration for what that may mean for the city. In some cases the result is “island” subdivisions for commuters that result in transportation bottlenecks and little encouragement to support, visit, shop, or become involved in our community.

The Carlton Business Association and Visit Carlton have done great work and I encourage their efforts. I think we should supplement them with an Economic Development Advisory Council, composed of business leaders, city council representatives, and possibly even representatives from the City of Yamhill, so we can work toward a cooperative – and complimentary economic development strategy that takes full advantage of all of our assets. Its role would lie in gathering information and developing possible solutions, not in regulation; we need no more of that.

There should be a spirit of partnership not one of reluctant association.

2. Our city has a diverse mix of businesses. Often, in an effort to survive, these industries clash with one another. As a council member how would you ensure the voices of all businesses are recognized and heard equally?

The first answer is to listen carefully to all the people and businesses involved, and not prejudge or take sides. Regular contacts and updates between the city manager, mayor, and CBA are critical elements of such communications.

Here too an Economic Development Advisory Council could provide value. It would bring representatives from all types of businesses (or as many as want to participate) to the same table, and along with both city and county representation, would allow parties to discuss issues and work through differences BEFORE the clashes occur.

3. Our business community is facing difficulties with growth due to the following factors: limited commercial space, zoning restrictions, outdated infrastructure, and limited parking. How do you feel Carlton could address these issues?

Carlton has a Comprehensive Plan that addresses all of these issues. Our problems stem in part from city officials paying too little attention to that plan and the changes in it that we need; it has not been updated in a decade or more. It's time to pull all the stakeholders together, go through the plan in detail and get our development "blueprint" updated. Not all but some of these limitations can be eased if we update our city rules with today's and tomorrow's needs in mind.

4. Recently, the city council voted to approve a re-route of highway 47 in Carlton. As a council member, how would you support the businesses (either along the newly formed highway or along Main St) who may be negatively impacted by the construction?

If you're asking specifically about actual construction activity, we are, sadly, at the mercy of the construction schedule. I was one of the council members who originally requested an ad hoc Citizens Committee that would be in close contact to review and keep our citizens informed of the ODOT construction plans and schedule.

We should keep this committee in place to provide early warning of construction schedules so that advance support activities for the affected businesses could be put into place and activated. I think those activities would need to be defined by the businesses, city, and state to ensure the best support for the business as well as everyone's safety and welfare.

No matter which route the state ends up rebuilding or creating, our city, and businesses especially, are going to be stressed. State transportation officials do realize this, but they are constrained by legal requirements. Our best defense is for us to have a trust-based, familiar communication system on the part of both the city and the state, so questions and issues can be addressed quickly and honestly before they get out of hand, as sometimes happened this year.

As to the future of Highway 47 and Carlton, I see the realignment or the rebuilding of Main Street as a short-term band-aid for the larger issue, which is the increased presence of all types of vehicles through Carlton. Between the current development plans of our city, Yamhill's approximately 80-home subdivision, and the new subdivisions McMinnville is developing, we're looking at more than 400 houses – which will mostly produce commuter traffic – in the next few years. Carlton is already experiencing rush hour traffic in the mornings and early evenings as commuters from Washington and Multnomah counties head to homes south of us.

It's time for the affected cities – Carlton, Yamhill, and McMinnville – along with Yamhill County, to begin working with the state on a regional solution for the increased traffic that will provide safety and relief for our cities.

5. As a city council candidate, what would you like the businesses of Carlton to know about you?

I first visited and fell in love with Carlton/Yamhill County in 1985. In the late '90s my husband and I took a year to travel throughout the lower 48 states, looking for a place where we wanted to "retire." We eventually found Carlton was our hands-down choice of the place we wanted to call home.

I'm here by choice, and I want to know that I've helped this community remain the special place I found in 1985. We can't stop growth and change. But we can control the way Carlton develops ... and control what we become.