



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION – CITY COUNCIL POSITIONS

City: West Richland      Position: City Council Position #6

Candidate: Scott Whalen

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

Within a five house radius of our home, live 16 family members in 4 separate houses with 10 children ranging from 1-14 years of age. With so many children lined up in the queue, I have become deeply concerned with maintaining, even improving, the wonderful quality of life in West Richland. I see preserving our safe community, maintaining a healthy infrastructure, and spurring economic development as vital to the future of our city. I am not running on a platform of beefs, gripes, complaints, or accusations about past city decisions. That is not my style. I simply want to take a more active role in keeping West Richland a great place to live.

- **Why do you believe you are qualified to sit on city council?**

First, I have a desire to serve, really serve. In addition to coaching youth sports and helping at schools like so many of us do, my family has also dedicated many hours of hard, hands-on, work to literally build our community. Examples within roughly the last year include:

- Helping build the West Richland community garden boxes and laying nearby sod
- Helping haul and spread 1 acre of landscaping rock at The Lakes Park
- Loading dumpsters on Earth Day at Enterprise Middle School
- Clearing a vacant lot on Van Giesen
- Helping plan and host an annual Arc of Tri-Cities Christmas Party
- Serving as an Assistant District Commissioner in Boy Scouts

Second, I am proactive. Of the eight candidates running for city council, I am the only one to have to have sat down, one on one, with any of the city staff to discuss issues facing our community. I know this is true because I asked. I have met with the mayor (twice) and all 4 department directors (3 of them more than once) to try and gain a better understanding of the issues facing West Richland. This illustrates the proactive and rigorous approach that I will bring to this position.

Third, I have expertise with public engagement. For the past two years at PNNL, I have coordinated formal meetings for the Department of Energy (DOE) to solicit public feedback on issues related to energy efficiency. This involved bringing together government, industry, trade associations, manufacturers, academia, and the general public to discuss and comment on DOE direction. My understanding of effective public engagement would be a benefit to the West Richland city council.

Fourth, measured thinking and background research. With BS, MS, and PhD degrees in multiple engineering disciplines, I am not prone to rash decisions, misinterpreting data, or coming to conclusions without doing my best to fully consider the options at hand.

- **How do you see the various governments of the Tri-Cities working together to promote regional economic development?**

Currently, staff and elected officials from the various local governments convene on various issues. However, I am not aware of a standing committee dedicated to the topic of sharing insights and lessons learned on the economic development front. I would support such a collaboration between cities. In addition, active involvement with Local Ports, the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, and TRIDEC are an effective vehicle for enabling city governments to work together on economic development.

- **In your view, what is the biggest economic opportunity for your city?**

The biggest economic opportunity in West Richland is a vibrant and thriving Van Giesen corridor. This is an exceedingly complicated issue and, as of yet, no one has figured out a way to make much headway. There are steps being taken though, such as the Yakima River Project and the renovation of the Irrigation and Feed Store, but progress is agonizingly slow. We need an actionable plan. I would propose that a study be commissioned that analyzes how other similar communities around the nation have revitalized main street. Certainly such an assessment would generate ideas that could be explored through a public hearing process, and ultimately implemented in our community as part of a deliberate plan to revitalize the Van Giesen corridor.

- **What is your city's greatest economic challenge?**

West Richland's greatest economic challenge is that our sales tax revenue is not keeping up with our rapid population growth. This is challenging our ability to continue providing high quality core services.

Here is a remarkable statistic. The median household income in West Richland, at \$82K, is 60% higher than Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco. Yet our per capita sales tax revenue is the lowest in the Tri-Cities and is lower than Benton City and Prosser as well. What does this mean? A large fraction of our hard earned dollars are "leaking" beyond our city boundary to help pay for services in surrounding communities.

We need to keep more of our tax dollars within our own community. The best way to accomplish this is to have more business retailers and/or service providers in West Richland that we want to give our business to. As a city councilor, I will work on ways to encourage business development of a type, and at a location, that citizens are supportive of. I believe this is a critical issue for the long term health of West Richland.

- **If elected, how do you see yourself and city council working with the Regional Chamber to promote economic growth?**

Some examples of how, as a city councilor, I would propose working with the Regional Chamber are:

- Ensure that the city advertises new opportunities to the Regional Chamber such as the Keene and Belmont commercial district
- Volunteer to talk at monthly chamber luncheons
- Attend ribbon cutting ceremonies
- Encourage West Richland businesses to join the Regional Chamber and educate them on the value of business connections and networking that can come from doing so.

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- Please return all completed questionnaires to Austin Neilson, Government & Economic Affairs Director, at the Tri-City Regional Chamber via email at [austin.neilson@tricityregionalchamber.com](mailto:austin.neilson@tricityregionalchamber.com) no later than **Friday, September 25, 2015**.
  - All questionnaire responses will be shared with Regional Chamber members via email, chamber website and chamber social media.

- **All candidates are offered an opportunity to record a three-minute video about their candidacy/campaign at the Regional Chamber office on Wednesday, October 7; Thursday, October 8 or Friday, October 9.** Please contact Austin Neilson at (509) 491-3233 or [austin.neilson@tricityregionalchamber.com](mailto:austin.neilson@tricityregionalchamber.com) to arrange a date/time.