Questions for Candidates for the Office of Dover City Council President

What do you consider your greatest contribution to the performance of city government in Dover since you were first elected to the Dover City Council?

As one member of a group of nine, I have listened, asked questions and learned. I can say that I am honored and proud to have served with members of this council.

How would you describe your leadership style ?

This was addressed in my verbal statement.

Comment on the following critical traits of leadership and provide examples of how you will ensure that these traits characterize your term as Council President:

Inclusiveness

Sharing of Information

Facilitation of the expression of divergent views

Ability to resolve differences and achieve consensus w/o promoting a favored position

Enhancing the ability of others to carry out their responsibilities

The Council President's most obvious responsibility is the presiding role at Council meetings. How would you describe the role of the Council President as "the presiding officer".

The Chair should keep the meeting organized, moving smoothly, and make sure that all motions are clear and understood when voted on. Also, it is important to assure that all council members have the opportunity to express their opinions. As chair, when I would want to take part in the discussion, I would temporarily transfer the chair to another council member. I also think taking a class in Robert's Rules of Orders would be very helpful and I will attempt to accomplish that as soon as I could.

Describe how you would strengthen rather than dominate other Council members in the governing process ?

How will you help the Council work through differences expeditiously, and encourage the Council to face issues and resolve them decisively without promoting your own favored position ?

How do you expect to keep open the lines of communication with all members of Council and between all members so that there is full access to and higher levels of shared information in a more timely fashion ?

Agenda meetings will be announced and open to all members of council. Meetings with the staff who report to council, will be as much as permitted by FOIA will be open to all council members. Written summaries would also be useful and used when appropriate.

How would you define the role of the Council President as "spokesperson" for the Council ?

The Council President is only one of nine, and does not have an automatic proxy to speak for the council. Care will be taken to not to limit the council's actions by any statement made by the chair. I also will report to council on outside meetings and their relationship to the city.

How would you strengthen the Council's linkages to the public ?

How would you improve the Council's responsiveness to the articulated needs of Dover's citizens ?(For example, comments made by citizens during the "open comment period" at Council meetings.)

Council members should receive a report on what actions were taken relating to each comment.

How would you define the terms of the Council President's involvement in the administration and management of the city ?

The Council President serves as link from council to the administration. Keeping the information flowing is extremely important.

How would you ensure that there is not even a "perception" that the Council President is "directing city staff" ?

See comments about meetings above.

How would you describe the pattern of interaction that should occur between the Council President and:

The City Clerk

The City Manager

The Mayor

Other government officials/bodies

Non-governmental organizations

The media

The Public

How do you expect to promote the lines of communication with these individuals/entities so that their interactions with the Council are strengthened and so that the Council gets full access to and higher levels of shared information in a timely fashion from them ?

What means will you promote to improve the Council's capacity to collect information and conduct analysis in order to better evaluate policy and program choices ?

What means or methods will you promote to ensure that the Council has enough time and resources to deal effectively with important policy issues ?

What means or methods will you promote to improve how Council members can more effectively perform their oversight and performance appraisal responsibilities ?

Prepared by Councilman Eugene B. Ruane

May 1, 2008

Questions for Candidates for the Office of Dover City Council President

What do you consider your greatest contribution to the performance of city government in Dover since you were first elected to the Dover City Council?

1. Belief and commitment that issues need to be publically debated and fair play must be ensured during the proceedings. Examples of this belief:

   - ❊ Elimination of public quarreling on Council.
   - ❊ Fostered the elimination of "no" motions, which were creating confusion.
   - ❊ Explanation of all motions on the floor going to vote by any member who voices or non-verbally communicates confusion about a motion. This is to prevent any accidental votes due to misunderstanding of the motion.
   - ❊ Belief and behavior that each member is equal in importance and thereby deserving the right to be heard in deliberation.
   - ❊ Commitment not to "poll" members outside the meetings, but allowing issues to come forth without favoring views to ensure "transparent" government.
   - ❊ Commitment not to engage in debate or opinions while presiding. Input is limited to requesting information or asking for staff opinion during a deliberation. Listening, not talking during deliberation.
   - ❊ Placement of members on committees which utilize their talents and take full advantage of their skill sets.

2. Belief and commitment that teamwork and partnering with our community, businesses, and other elected officials is the soundest method to give our citizens good government.

   - ❊ Establishing regular quarterly meetings between City Council and Kent County Levy Court
   - ❊ Establishing three (3) citizen commissions to enable City Council to better understand and then deliberate on complicated issues. These partnerships saved the citizens and taxpayers of Dover money that would have been utilized for consultants and/or studies.
   - ❊ Membership on liaison committees with community partners such as:

     Greater Dover Committee
     Kent County Tourism Board
     2030 Energy Committee
     Kent County Economic Development Transitional Committee
     Civic Center Committee
     DAFB Honorary Commanders Program
     Dover Housing Authority
     Delaware Criminal Justice Council
     Delaware Tech Entrepreneurship Advisory Board

   - ❊ Trusted relationships and partnerships with persons at the highest level of government in Delaware to homeless in the streets. These relationships have been fostered for over 35 years and have worked to keep Dover's best interests secure. Most recent collaboration can be discussed with members on an individual basis.

How do you describe your leadership style?

Managerial style is task and forward progress focused, direct, proactive, seeking first to understand and then be understood, blunt, communicating directly and to the point. Risk taker with quick decision making skills and experience. The only member of Council in small business, meeting a payroll every two weeks.

Comment on the following critical traits of leadership and provide examples of how you will ensure that these traits characterize your term as Council President:

Inclusiveness - Everyone is equal with an equal right to be heard.

Sharing of Information - Quite by my surprise, I found that the **information pyramid** is inverted because most issues are referred to committee before coming to the full Council. Committee members know more about issues than the President of Council. Members are the real locus of information, not the Council President.

Facilitation of the expression of divergent views - Of the most critical importance, highest responsibility for the Council President.

Ability to resolve differences and achieve consensus w/o promoting a favored position - Information is the key to resolving differences and achieving consensus. Giving members ample opportunity to question staff, consultants, and guests in order to without interruption and without prejudice. Consensus occurs most often as a result of information is flowing freely. When consensus is not possible and difference cannot be resolved, everyone on Council has the right to be heard respectfully.

Enhancing the ability of others to carry out their responsibilities - Providing information if it is available and restraining from micro management of the Council Committees.

The Council President's most obvious responsibility is the presiding at Council meetings. How would you describe the role of Council President as "the presiding officer".

Keep order by upholding rules and expedite business without depriving any member the ability to be heard, while remaining impartial an fair and not expressing opinion during debate.

Describe how you would strengthen rather than dominate other Council members during the governing process.

Letting information flow from the Committee level and making sure that Council members have enough time to get their questions thoroughly answered and their opinions thoroughly presented before a vote is taken.

How will you help Council work through differences expeditiously, and encourage the Council to face issues and resolve them decisively without promoting your own favored position?

The best answer to this question is to cite a recent example concerning the proposed Civic Center. The recommendation from the Commission gave Council the ability to wait for other determining factors to develop before voting. This was the position that I personally favored because it took Dover out of the "line of fire" from any repercussions as a result of a vote, "for or against". Although I made my position known to members who asked, I placed the matter on the Council agenda to permit open debate, I did not join into the debate, and then voted with the majority because of my fundamental belief that the majority was taking the position that was the most moderate for all members, thereby creating a unanimous consensus.

Since that time, I have been asked as Council President to attend meetings by state and county governmental officials regarding the Civic Center. My input in these meetings has been to carefully articulate the position of Council, to remind members that Dover had made a contribution of land, and to request and present an opinion from our City Solicitor that reinforces arguments that were presented during the debate that laws should be passed by the General Assembly to ensure that the City of Dover, Kent County, and the State of Delaware be "held harmless" in the event of any operating deficit.

How do you expect to keep open the lines of communication with all members of Council and between all members so that there is full access to higher levels of shared information in a more timely manner?

It would be a mistake to believe that information is not being shared in a timely manner. I share it as soon as I get it. The problem is that information is not always as forthcoming as members would expect. That is why I have encouraged others to meet directly with the City Manager if they choose. The other real dilemma about the sharing of information between the Council President and members, is that it sometimes flies in the face of the FOIA and presentation of "favored" positions. I am much more comfortable with members accessing the City Manager and other Council appointed positions with questions and input as long as members are mindful of the time that is required by staff to meet information requests and then referring a matter to me to be placed on the Council agenda if the member believes their needs to be an open discussion on the matter. Most matters can be handled directly by members and Council appointed staff and do not need to go forward.

How would you define the role of the Council President as the "spokesperson" for the Council?

The example cited above best describes how I feel about role of "spokesperson". If my opinion is different than that of Council, I define it as such and request that Council members be contacted individually for them to articulate their position. This is the best method I have found to remain fair to the process and to all members.

How would you strengthen the Council's linkages to the public?

During my tenure as Council President, I have utilized public and private partnerships to help us derive and analyze information. Three commissions have been presented for Council approval and received it. Members have been community and business leaders who have worked diligently to help members understand and decide courses of action.

How would you define the responsiveness to the articulated needs of Dover citizens? (For example, comments made by citizens during the "open comment period" at Council meetings?

I believe that City staff members are currently very responsive to the needs of Dover citizens.

How would you define the terms of the Council President's involvement in the administration and management of the city?

I believe that it is incumbent upon the Council President to avoid micro management of city staff. I also believe that any concerns about Council appointed staff must be communicated to all members as soon as possible. I further believe that it is the responsibility of the Council President to ensure that our form of government is preserved and maintained. For this reason, I believe that it is important to notify city staff if their behavior in the workplace infringes upon Council duties and responsibilities. I also believe that members have the right to speak and inquire about issues **before** city staff issue an unsolicited opinion.

How would you ensure that there is not even a "perception" that the Council is "directing city staff".

By meeting with the City Manager on a weekly basis and communicating a concern, if voiced, directly to the member. For other Council appointed positions, I believe that communication should occur on a regular ongoing basis and that trust be established to permit the free flow of information.

How would you describe the pattern of interaction that should occur between the Council President and:

The City Clerk - Daily contact whenever possible to keep up with events and information
The City Manager - Weekly contact or more often if a situation dictates interaction or information.
The Mayor - Weekly contact or more often if a situation dictates interaction or information.
Other government officials/bodies - Whenever meetings are held or more often if the situation dictates.
Non governmental organizations - Whenever meetings are held or more often if the situation dictates.
The media - When approached for failure to interact with the media satisfactorily often creates confusion.
The Public - When approached, especially if a concern is presented.

How do you expect to promote the lines of communication with these individuals/entities so that their interactions with the Council are strengthened and so that the Council gets full access to higher levels of shared information in a timely fashion from them?

This is occurring now, although members may not be aware. Information, again flows from below not from above. All information is given to members or to staff when received. If members feels information is not forthcoming, members should inquire if information is being transferred or not.

What means will you promote to improve to ensure that the Council has enough time and resources to deal effectively with important policy issues?

Committee chairpersons and the Council President do not limited the time for discussion or debate if members are not repeating themselves. There seems to be ample time to deal effectively with issues as long as the above consideration is honored by all.

What means will you promote to improve the Council's capacity to collect information and conduct analysis in order to better evaluate policy and program choices.

I believe that the City staff are forthcoming and as expedient as possible with information and analysis of data currently. If members want a shorter or more exhaustive data finding and analysis, the matter should be brought before the full Council and alternatives discussed before instituting a policy or program change.

What methods will you promote to ensure that the Council has enough time and resources to deal effectively with important policy issues?

Again, if member want more time and resources to deal, the matter should be brought before the full Council and alternatives discussed before any change is made.

What means or methods will you promote to improve how Council members can more effectively perform their oversight and appraisal responsibilities.

Finally, if members want to more effectively perform their oversight and appraisal responsibilities, they should bring their concerns and recommendations to the full Council before any oversight and appraisal responsibilities are changed.