

THE ISSUES: LEXINGTON MAYOR

CANDIDATES WERE ASKED TO ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN 45 WORDS OR FEWER

JIM GRAY

Born: Aug. 18, 1953

Occupation: Chairman and CEO, Gray Inc. and Gray Construction

Public office: Vice mayor, 2007 to present

Web site: Jimgray.org



JIM NEWBERRY

Born: Dec. 16, 1956

Occupation: Attorney

Public office: Mayor, 2007 to present

Web site: MayorNewberry2010.com

QUALITIES

Why are you the better candidate to be Lexington's next mayor?

My 38 years in business give me the experience missing in the mayor's office. I've demonstrated my commitment to represent all citizens, not the special interests. I stood up to the water company, challenged flawed development decisions and fought to stop waste and no-bid contracts.

My record of accomplishment speaks for itself. I helped create over 3,000 jobs. I solved tough problems that the city has ignored for years. Despite the recession, my conservative fiscal management kept Lexington from laying off police officers and firefighters, unlike many other cities.

CENTREPOINTE

How does Lexington avoid a repeat of the CentrePointe situation, in which buildings were demolished for new construction that has not materialized?

It's essential that city leadership ask tough questions of developers. We need a more thoughtful discussion of what we want our city to look like. We need leadership that will stand up to those special interests and ask the tough questions.

I am confident that block will be developed, creating hundreds of jobs, in the near future. Some historic buildings need protection, so I inventoried downtown to identify them. I unshackled code enforcement, ending demolition by neglect, which had compromised the CentrePointe block buildings years ago.

ENVIRONMENT

What would you do to reduce Lexington's carbon footprint, which has been identified as the largest per person in the U.S.?

My company has been recognized by Engineering News Record as one of the nation's top green contractors. As mayor, I'll bring innovative thinking to city hall. I will champion the use of our public transit system and make complete systems for bike and pedestrian traffic.

I've already started! I created the city's first Department of Environmental Quality, and government is leading by example. I've committed to a 10 percent energy reduction goal for city buildings. I expanded recycling, established bicycle lanes and trails, advocated green development and supported mass transit.

WEG

What would you do to build on the exposure the city got during the World Equestrian Games?

We should immediately commission a study to determine how we can build upon the successes of WEG. We need a factual understanding of the financial impacts and the return on public investment. Knowing these answers will help us market Lexington and make informed decisions.

Exposure will build through wise investments we made downtown and at the Horse Park that will pay future dividends. The park is now the best place, worldwide, for equine events. The Legacy Trail makes Lexington a cycling destination. Downtown streetscape invites increased interaction with universities.

SPENDING

Name one specific thing you would do to reduce city expenditures.

As the state auditor's report recommends, we need to overhaul our procurement process, including eliminating no-bid contracts. Solid project management and purchasing is essential to protecting taxpayer dollars.

I've already started! In four years I've reduced government payroll by 250-plus positions, saving over \$15 million annually. Since 2008, I cut the mayor's office budget 32 percent. By increasing recycling, I reduced property taxes. Soon we implement computerized garbage pick-up routes to reduce costs.

INVESTIGATION

What is the lesson learned from the months-long investigation of fraud allegations involving the city's procurement of insurance services?

Transparency is vital. Whistle-blowers need the assurance they won't be punished. Spending \$100,000 in legal fees to litigate ourselves is foolish. You can't run a company behind closed doors, and it's no way to run a city.

We learned nothing about fraud. The auditor, like two others before her, found no fraud. Some council members wasted our time and our money, playing politics for my opponent. Lawyers' and auditors' fees will top \$100,000, enough to pay one-year salaries of two police officers!

IMMIGRATION

Absent federal action, should the city do more to control illegal immigration?

Citizens of Lexington can't rely on the federal government. I'll reopen the lines of communication with our first responders and work with them to ensure the protection of our citizens. I will take a zero-tolerance approach, just as I've done in my company.

I've already started! Lexington is the first Kentucky city to have the "Secure Communities" system. Fingerprints from anyone arrested here are now entered into state and national computers to identify those who have committed crimes or are here illegally, making our city safer.

JOBS

Name one thing you would do to increase employment in Lexington. Be specific.

As I say in my Fresh Start Plan at Jimgray.org/fsjobs we will work to recruit three new corporate headquarters to Lexington. Gray has helped companies create 21,989 jobs all across this country; I will bring that experience to city hall.

I've already started! Establishment of the Higher Education Triangle, with UK, Transylvania and BCTC surrounding downtown, will increase economic activity long-term. In recognizing the economic potential of university brainpower, and focusing on horses, health care and high tech, I've helped create over 3,000 jobs.

EDUCATION

Name one specific thing you would do to retain more college-educated young people in Lexington.

Create a plan aligned with UK's Top 20 initiative to ensure that as the university grows, Lexington is able to employ the best talent. Economic opportunity is essential to keeping talent here. Currently, the city is creating two jobs for every 12 college graduates. Unacceptable.

I've already started! Bright young people seek good jobs. We are creating those. They want attractions like recreational trails, a lively downtown and a vibrant arts community. We are creating those. They want a good place to raise a family, and we rank high nationally.

FAULTS

What is your opponent's greatest fault?

Communicating. Bullying isn't leadership. He didn't listen to citizens opposed to CentrePointe; he ignored council's call for an airport audit and exploration of alternatives to the water plant. There's a reason all city employee organizations, including public safety and emergency services, want a new mayor.

I think he cares about Lexington, but he has shown no ability to get things done. As vice mayor for four years, he has not sponsored a single substantial legislative initiative or ordinance. He's a Monday-morning quarterback who offers criticism but little else.

TRAFFIC

Name Lexington's most troublesome traffic spot, and tell us how your administration will fix it. Be specific.

Clays Mill is a mess. There's been discussion about widening this road for 20 years. I'll fight for state and federal funding to complete overdue projects. In my business I've gained experience expediting these processes to get the job done, quickly and on budget.

I've already started efforts to widen New Circle Road's limited access portion within its existing right-of-way. We'll continue to work with state and federal officials to obtain funding for design and construction.

GROWTH

Would you advocate for or against an expansion of the Urban Service Boundary during the next four years?

No. I am against an expansion at this time. I called for the moratorium on expanding the Urban Service Boundary four years ago when I ran for council at-large and would continue that stance as mayor.

I continue to oppose expansion, as in 2006. I support protecting our farmland. Even in this tough economy, we made farmland preservation a priority. Ample land is available for development or redevelopment inside the boundary. I supported redevelopment with tax incentives and more flexible zoning.

PRIORITIES

If elected, what proposal would you ask the Urban County Council to approve first?

If not passed before I become mayor, I will ask to adopt the model procurement code for city purchasing. One that includes my Buy Lexington First plan. We should be fair in our procurement while working to ensure that Lexington's business benefits Lexington's businesses.

Registration of paid lobbyists, legislation I first asked council to approve last December. It would make our government more open, accountable and transparent. The public has a right to know who is paying, and who is being paid, in an effort to influence government decisions.

DEVELOPMENT

Should the city set design standards for developments in the downtown area?

Absolutely. The "We'll take what we get" attitude is unacceptable. I've consistently called for a form of design standards throughout downtown. This isn't about overstepping your boundaries as a government, but protecting the identity and value of your city.

I am not opposed to design standards, as long as they don't hamper economic activity and, most importantly, job production. I also respect private property rights, which are rightfully strong in this state. Legislating taste is not easy — even architects disagree on design standards.