

Vaughn Goettler – Responses to resident questions

NOTLRA Residents Association

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE VERBATIM AND HAVE NOT BEEN

ALTERED IN ANY WAY) You may choose to respond or not. All responses are to be forwarded to

<mailto:notlelection2026@gmail.com>

Questions received from residents that may not have been fully addressed at the forums.

Candidates are encouraged to respond and forward their responses to the following email address. Note that questions and responses will be posted on our notelection.ca website.

For both Lord Mayor and Councillor candidates

Q1 - Can you tell me how and why your approach would be different than what the existing council members have been taking in their governing?

I will listen to the residents. And I will work as Lord Mayor full time.

The current council has consistently ignored the views and wishes of residents on too many occasions, involving too many issues. The current council instead has paid too much attention to the views and wishes of special interests, including developers whose projects are out of scale or inappropriate for Niagara-on-the-Lake. When I am Lord Mayor, the views of our residents will come first.

Q2 - I have a question which of you have accepted money whether for performing services or as a gratuity from any developers or their related companies.

I have not accepted money — and will not accept money or any form of gift — whether for performing services or as a gratuity from any developers or their related companies.

Q3 - Several studies that the Town initiated identified major gaps in planned investment vs

actual funds available particularly gaps in infrastructure funding. What steps will you take to find the required funds.

As Lord Mayor I will move immediately to identify the gaps that are the highest priority — right now this appears to be managing flooding but we should identify all gaps. Our Council must then work together to make investing in these needs a priority. This may involve allocating funding from elsewhere in the budget or working with the Region and the Province to make sure we are getting an appropriate and fair share of funding to meet our infrastructure and other needs.

Q4 - What does “transparency” mean to you?

Transparency means debating and making decisions openly, with recorded votes by Council members and a record of Council decisions and Staff supporting documents that

the public can see online. This does not happen consistently now with the current Council and I will change this.

Also, the public should always have access to public documents — it is not the job of Council or Town Staff to deny access because they consider the request from someone who is “opinionated” (a policy that is the case now). Open, transparent government will be the rule.

Q5 - How would you describe your style of leadership?

Before seeking the Lord Mayor’s position, I was a successful chief executive officer. As a CEO I know that to be successful, you can’t just boss people around. You have to work together.

Good leaders draw ideas from the group and help make everyone’s contribution lead to decisions that serve the best interests for the greatest number of people. In our Town, that means putting residents first.

Q6 - What are the hallmarks of your personal code of conduct?

Honesty, respect for others, kindness and always trying to understand the other person's point of view. I am also decisive — people may agree or disagree with what I decide but they will always know where I stand.

Q7 - How do you remain informed of issues that affect the greater good and wellbeing of our town?

I talk to people. I meet with as many residents as I can. More importantly, I listen to what they have to say.

I also rely on a growing group of friends, neighbours and advisors who can offer deeper insight into what our residents are thinking and saying. I follow our local media closely to keep informed of what's on peoples' minds. And of course, I rely on the detailed work prepared and delivered by our hard-working Town Staff. All of this — not just information from one source — goes into my decision making.

Q8 - What measures would you use to consult the voting public in order to reach consensus on major decisions, for example, on the future use of the old hospital site so that it serves the larger community?

I think we need to listen a lot more to what residents are telling us than our current Council has. We need to hear from residents speaking both directly to Council and through the volunteer Citizens Committees that I will reinstate after they were abandoned by the current Lord and Deputy Mayor.

For the future of the old hospital site, for example, I would open the process with a request for ideas that will be good for the community and would enhance our Town, not just a parking garage.

Q9 - How often and for what reasons do you engage in person with individual unelected residents of the Town of Niagara on the Lake?

All the time. I am a resident too! I listen to everybody, not just special interests.

Q10 - As a rule, how soon after receiving a message from a NOTL resident do you respond to it?

As soon as possible. I intend to be full-time Lord Mayor.

Q11 - How would you approach deciding how to vote on issues of significance to residents of Niagara on the Lake?

That's easy. Residents first. That means putting the interests of our residents ahead of demands from bureaucrats, or the Region, or the Province, or developers or other special interests.

Q11 - What three specific issues that affect the Town do you deem priorities to take action on?

1. Governance — We need to change the way we govern Niagara-on-the-Lake. The setup now has our Town's current leadership bowing to Queen's Park and the Region, then following what Staff tell them, and only then asking what the residents think.

This is backwards. Residents must come first.

2. Infrastructure now — If your house was flooded — and mine was — it's no consolation to hear from our Town's leadership how hard they have worked on the sewers and drainage. I don't doubt it, but leadership means acting before a problem becomes a crisis. It's still not clear why our Town didn't declare an emergency. We need action to prevent the next flooding or weather catastrophe. We need to actually follow the climate change action plan we have — our Town has been too slow to do this and I will change this.

3. No inappropriate development — Our Town's leadership has caved in too much and too often to development that is out of scale or will be disruptive to our residents' way of life. The pressures are only going to get worse, for example, the Province is pushing to build a huge expansion to our airport that would gobble up farmland, not

to serve our Town but to serve Niagara Region. Our Town needs to abide by a rigorous set of criteria for development that puts residents first, not special interests.

Q12 - What action would you be inclined to take on short-term rentals in NOTL?

I think we need to look quickly at the current state of short-term rentals — the ratio of short-term rentals to B&Bs and hotel space; the problems that emerge and whether the solutions are easy or difficult and whether the rules are fair so that one type of accommodation is not being treated in a way that harms the others. We should bring all of the stakeholders together and listen. This should not be an airing of grievances, we should find solutions together. We need to keep in mind that we have an issue here precisely because our Town is beautiful and people want to visit it.

Q13 - What strategies would you use to ensure that longtime Town of NOTL residents are

fairly considered and able to continue living in the area if they wish to do so?

We need to do a lot more to get serious about facilities for aging in place in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Studies were done more than a decade ago and not really followed up. We need to look at how to attract and anchor homes and long-term care where our residents can downsize to, where they can live happily, socialize and walk or wheel to all the familiar places they love. Niagara-on-the-Lake must remain a place that is not only beautiful to visit, but also beautiful to live in.

Q14 - How often do you shop in a Town of Niagara on the Lake supermarket or small business?

All the time. I live here.

Q15 - Have you ever been arrested for any reason, accused of fraud or offered a bribe?

No.

Questions for Mayoral Candidates

Q1. In what circumstances would you resort to applying strong mayor powers?

I have pledged to not apply strong mayor powers. I think they are inappropriate for our Town.

Q2. What measures would you use to consult the voting public and reach consensus on major decisions?

I make a point of listening. To do this at Town Hall, I will immediately reinstate the citizens' advisory committees that were abandoned under the current Lord and Deputy Mayor. Peoples' voices need to be heard and our residents need to know where and how they can make sure they are heard.

There is also a need to respect the public better. I am aware of Town-run meetings where residents were literally told to sit down and be quiet. This is unacceptable. I will make sure this never happens when I am Lord Mayor.

Q3. How would you describe your style of leadership?

Before seeking the Lord Mayor's position, I was a successful chief executive officer. As a CEO I know that to be successful, you can't just boss people around. You have to work together. And you have to do the job full time.

Good leaders draw ideas from the group and help make everyone's contribution lead to decisions that serve the best interests for the greatest number of people. In our Town, that means putting residents first.

Q4. What steps would you take to prevent the Town of NOTL from being amalgamated into a larger entity?

This is one of the biggest ongoing threats our Town faces. Amalgamation would lead to the end of our way of life in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I will resist amalgamation by sponsoring a resolution to oppose amalgamation. I will resist it as a member of Regional Council by standing firm at every opportunity to oppose any steps that appear

to lead to amalgamation. I will resist any efforts by Queen's Park to further their agenda that takes away local power from Towns like ours. My opponents boast of their cozy relationships with Queen's Park and at the Region. I think we need to change this. We need a close relationship with our own Town residents.

Q5. What does "transparency" mean to you?

Transparency means debating and making decisions openly, with recorded votes by Council members and a record of Council decisions and Staff supporting documents that the public can see online. This does not happen consistently now with the current Council and I will change this.

Also, the public should always have access to public documents — it is not the job of Council or Town Staff to deny access because they consider the request from someone who is "opinionated" (a policy that is the case now). Open, transparent government will be the rule.

Q6. What are the hallmarks of your personal code of conduct?

Honesty, respect for others, kindness and always trying to understand the other person's point of view. I am also decisive — people may agree or disagree with what I decide but they will always know where I stand.

a. Have you ever been arrested for any reason, accused of fraud or offered a bribe?

No.

Q7. How often and for what reasons do you engage in person with individual non-elected residents of the Town of Niagara on the Lake?

All the time. I am a resident too!

Q8. As a rule, how soon after receiving a message from a NOTL resident do you respond to it?

As soon as possible. I intend to be full-time Lord Mayor.

Q9. Roughly what percentage of your income do you annually donate to registered charitable organizations that support vulnerable populations?

My wife Lauren and I are philanthropists and volunteers who give to local causes including Palliative Care, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, the Upper Canada Heritage Trail and the Wilderness. I donate my time as well as funds. Our family of children and grandchildren also includes several rescue dogs.

Q10. When was the last time you shopped in a Town of Niagara on the Lake supermarket or small business?

Depending on the time of day, either yesterday or earlier today. I live here!

Q11. What efforts do you put forth to ensure that you are aware of and engaged sufficiently to know how the voting public feels about specific issues?

I meet with as many residents as I can. More importantly, I listen to what they have to say. I also rely on a growing group of friends, neighbours and advisors who can offer deeper insight into what our residents are thinking and saying. I follow our local media closely to keep informed of what's on peoples' minds. And of course, I rely on the detailed work prepared and delivered by our Town Staff. All of this — not just information from one source — goes into my decision making. Full time.

Q12 - If you are elected Lord Mayor, will you go on record as answering media and residents' questions when appropriate?

Yes. The idea that an elected person would refuse to answer someone because they are an "opinion" writer is ridiculous to me.