

DGCA 2011 Candidate Questionnaire Response

Candidate for: Mayor, Village of Downers Grove

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DG Residency: Since 1992

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Own a business in DG? No

Reason for Running for office:

I previously served as a Commissioner on the Village Council from 2001 to 2009. I chose not to run for a third term, allowing others to step up and serve. However, when Mayor Sandack's appointment to the State Senate unexpectedly created the opportunity to run for an open mayoral seat, I answered the call to serve my community once again.

Three most important issues facing the Village (in order of priority):

1. Sustaining Our Fiscal Health: Downers Grove admirably emerged from the Great Recession in far better condition than many of its neighbors, which is attributable to the hard work and tough choices made by the Village Council and Staff. But more daunting financial challenges loom ahead and tough revenue and expense decisions will be necessary to meet them. At the same time, delivery of principal services, key infrastructure, and economic development must be well-supported. In short, we must prudently cut where we can and invest where we must. While we must constantly strive to do more with less, austerity measures are not enough. We also must aspire to do things in ways as never before. This requires fair exploration and consideration of fresh ideas, including unorthodox ones.
2. Proactively Planning for Future Needs: While focusing on today's pressing needs, we must also lay the groundwork to address future obstacles and take advantage of upcoming opportunities. For this, long term vision and sound community and financial planning is essential.
3. Ending Divisiveness and Uniting in the Success of Our Community: Now, more than ever, the Village Council must work collaboratively and collegially with professional staff, residents and other stakeholders, and especially with one another. It is critical for everyone to be in the same boat, trying to row in the same general direction, and not trying to push one another out of the

boat. Open and inclusive leadership can build consensus from disparate views in support of the measures essential to our community's continued success.

Previous community service or volunteer activity, including previous elected positions:

Prior Public Service:

- Commissioner, Village of Downers Grove, Illinois: 2001-2009.
- Appointed Mayor Pro Tem, May 2003- May 2009.
- Former chair, Public Services Standing Committee, Finance and Administrative Standing Committee, Public Safety Standing Committee.
- Chair, Community Grants Commission: 2003, 2005-2007.
- Chair, Tourism & Events Commission: 2003-2009.
- Ex-officio member, Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation: 2007-2009.

Community Service:

- Life Member, Downers Grove Historical Society.
- Founding Member, Education Foundation of Downers Grove District 58.
- Member, Downers Grove "Noon" Lions Club.
- Board Member, Walk-in Ministry of Hope.
- Member, UIC Campus Alumni Advisory Board
- Former Member, Belle Aire School PTA (School Board Observer & Legislative Committee chair).
- Former Director, Orchard Brook Home Association, Downers Grove.
- Former Downers Grove Park District and Indian Boundary YMCA youth soccer coach.
- Past supporter of various local charities, cultural and community service organizations, including:
 - 1846 Blodgett House On The Move
 - Bonfield Express Foundation
 - West Suburban Humane Society
 - Indian Boundary YMCA
 - DuPage Senior Citizens Council
 - DG Public Library Foundation
 - Grove Foundation
 - DG Character Counts! Coalition
 - DG Chapter of Infant Welfare Society
 - DG Junior Woman's Club
 - SEASPAR
 - Helping Girls Navigate Adolescence
 - New World Repertory Theater

MARTIN TULLY'S RESPONSES TO DGCA'S "MAYOR QUESTIONS"

1. *There is a situation playing out in Wisconsin that highlights state and local pension issues. During the next four years, Downers Grove will be engaging in contractual negotiations with each of its public sector unions. Please tell us what you would do to ensure that village employees are fairly compensated while assuring future sustainability? What is the Mayor's role in negotiating contracts with the police, fire and public works unions? Be specific.*

Over the past decade, the Village has enjoyed a mostly collegial relationship with the collective bargaining units within the public safety and public works arenas, and the members of those unions have been equitably compensated for the important services they provide to the community. Through periodic labor contract negotiations, the Village has attempted to control escalating personnel costs through firm but fair bargaining positions. Of course, certain aspects of public employee union compensation – i.e. pension contributions – are outside the control of the municipality. Also, comparables in other communities beyond DG's control can often drive what is determined to be the "going rate."

Now, more than ever, market and macroeconomic conditions must be reflected in the compensation paid to union labor in the public service. Personnel costs now account for more than 75% of the operating budget of the Village and yet revenues are not and cannot keep pace with escalating personnel costs. We must seek outcomes – negotiated or otherwise – that appreciate and retain talented employees but also reflect the harsh reality that because revenues are flat or declining, wages must follow suit. **The** Village cannot commit to compensation structures that it lacks the ability to fund.

The collective bargaining role of the mayor under our local form of government is, in conjunction with the rest of the council, to establish the policy, direction and financial parameters for the negotiations and to approve any mutually-acceptable accord.

2. *During the past few years, the village council has been criticized for its approach to providing public funds for human and social services. In short, the philosophy that tax dollars should not be used to fund not-for-profits has prevailed. Please tell us which three social services you believe are most needed in Downers Grove. Please explain in detail your position on how these social services should be funded. If you believe that public dollars should be used, please be explicit in explaining from where these funds would be drawn.*

As a general matter, local government should not make a habit of collecting tax dollars for the direct purpose of redistributing them to not-for-profit service organizations selected by the local government and not the community. Direct support of such organizations by individuals who choose to do so is far more desirable and equitable. That said, local government plays a major role in the facilitation of the overall sense and success of the community. Support or facilitation (two related, but different concepts) of social services and/or not-for-profit organizations can

produce measurable returns on investment that are aligned with and advance the mission of the Village. In some instances, those investments can garner returns that save the Village from other, larger expenditures. By way of a hypothetical only, what if it could be demonstrated that support of a local D.A.R.E. program reduced public safety expenses in an amount greater than the cost to support the program? The point is not to second-guess decisions already made and implemented, but to simply illustrate that revenues, expenses and measurable returns on investment should be carefully considered and discussed with the community before adding, eliminating or restoring any programs. In deciding whether to support or facilitate a social service or not-for-profit service organization, it should be considered whether the benefit of doing so fits with and advances the Village's mission statement and strategic goals. If not, then another sponsor should be found. If so, and the benefit exceeds the cost of the support/facilitation, then the venture is worth pursuing. In those instances, funding can be aligned with the program or department whose specific mission is most closely enhanced. In the hypothetical above, it would most logically be aligned with public safety.

3. *Please rank the following village needs in order of most important to least important. It will be assumed that your highest ranked needs will be those to which you would agree to dedicate the most attention and village resources. Also, provide a brief reasoning for your ranking. Which other, if any, village needs would you rank higher in priority than those provided?*
- . Employee Compensation*
 - .Infrastructure Improvements*
 - .Community Development Issues*

The three choices presented are inextricably intertwined. Provision and maintenance of public infrastructure is one of the most basic and important services that government can provide and is also the least likely to be delivered by the private sector. If by "community development," you mean economic development, it is also important because it drives revenues that allow for the funding of public infrastructure. If you are instead referring to the provision of services to residents, businesses and developers to improve and develop their properties, that function is also important because "change happens" and we can either be overrun by it or help guide it through responsible planning. Of course, employee compensation is critical because it is not only the single largest expense component of the Village's operating budget – to the exclusion of the other two choices – but provides the human capital necessary to address infrastructure and community development issues. That said, and for purposes of the present exercise, my rankings are as follows:

- (i) *Infrastructure Improvements:* Streets, water, sidewalks, and stormwater systems must be adequately maintained. Without them, the village can't function. Period.
- (ii) *Employee Compensation:* As mentioned, personnel costs represent nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the operating budget and revenues will not and cannot keep pace with these escalating costs. Something has to change.

- (iii) *Community Development Issues:* While intently focusing on the pressing needs of today, we must also look to the future of our community in order to lay the groundwork for continued success. For this, long term vision and planning is essential. We must proactively plan for and effectively address infrastructure needs. Also, we should be ready for when the economy improves and be prepared to capitalize upon it.

4. Give your definition of core services. What do you believe is the best way to fund those services?

“Core” has become a four letter word in some segments of the community. I prefer to think in terms of primary and ancillary services. Primary services are those that we must provide in some fashion, all there may be alternative means by which to do so. Ancillary services are those that we do not have to provide but which are consistent with our mission statement and are deemed to be highly desirable by those who must pay for them, i.e. the overall community.

How should primary services be funded? In a word, “responsibly.” Downers Grove admirably emerged from the Great Recession with a balanced budget and healthy reserves in place for 2011, which is more than can be said for some of our neighboring communities. While that is a tribute to the hard work and tough decisions of the Village Council and Staff, it simply means that we are the healthiest patient in the emergency room. More challenges loom on the horizon and there is still a serious disconnect between revenues and expenditures, largely because the most significant component of the operating budget -- personnel costs -- will continue to rise while revenues are flat or decreasing. Therefore, we must continue to responsibly and creatively revisit both sides of the equation.

On the expense side, the Village’s top priority should be the provision of quality municipal services and infrastructure at a reasonable cost while staying within our means. In order to do so, Village management has to be empowered to creatively identify and implement additional ways to do more with less, and to tease further efficiencies from municipal operations. Personnel costs must be tightly controlled while appreciating and retaining talented employees. Additional partnerships, consolidations and collaborative efforts with private and other public entities should be vigorously pursued. Also, service levels should be revisited as part of a broad community conversation to confirm what is appropriate for our Village profile and what we are willing to pay for.

On the revenue side, further property tax increases should be avoided. Instead, alternative revenue sources have to be part of the conversation, especially ones that are more directly and equitably related to the service provided. Also key to our current and future fiscal health is the proactive and prudent support of economic development. As I have often said, we should seek to increase our tax base, not our tax rate.

5. *Given the unpredictability of village revenues, what is your specific plan to increase revenue sources?*

Diversification of revenue streams, and not becoming overly dependent on any one, is most prudent. Further, no tax source is limitless and each revenue source has a pain threshold. Economic development is a key revenue driver that must be well-supported in that we should strive to expand our tax base before raising our tax rate. Prudent use of debt, i.e. bonds, when the economics are favorable, can also be a reasonable and responsible method for addressing capital needs. I have long favored use of dedicated revenue streams to fund particular programs or projects because they are more accountable and of visible benefit to the taxpayers. Since 2002, I have favored exploring a stormwater utility as a more equitable and accountable method of paying for stormwater compliance and infrastructure maintenance.

6. *The village increased property taxes to help meet budgetary needs. Do you agree with this decision? If not, please specify the reasons.*

Facing the greatest economic downturn in a generation, it is undisputed that extraordinary measures were necessary to maintain the Village's fiscal health. Because existing revenues no longer kept pace with escalating costs; spending cuts and service reductions, along with certain revenue enhancements and modest use of reserves, were deemed to be unavoidable. The Village Council was wise to address spending reductions first, before considering property tax increases. Notwithstanding the long-range financial plan, which calls for another \$500,000 increase in the property tax levy for 2012, I intend to challenge Village staff and my colleagues on the Council to obviate that measure.

7. *Should Downers Grove continue to elect council members at large? If not, what are the reasons for changing from the current method?*

Simply put, yes.

8. *What do you see as the role of village boards and commissions?*

Village boards and commissions serve a vital role in providing to Village staff and council extensive, volunteer advice and expertise on a variety of topics. Their recommendations, even if not ultimately adopted by the Council, are essential to thoughtful consideration of most issues. Boards and commissions also serve as a opportunity for residents to participate in local government, giveback to the community, and potentially prepare for future service a selected officials. After all, it is important to a highly-functioning organization to identify and encourage its future leaders.

9. *What skill set of professional and personal experiences will you bring to this position?*

I am an 18-year resident of Downers Grove with eight years of experience as a twice-elected councilman representing the residents of our fine Village. For the latter six of those years, I served as the Mayor Pro Tem. My prior public service experience compliments my 20-years of professional experience as a commercial litigation attorney helping businesses and individuals solve problems in the private sector. As a Village Commissioner from 2001 to 2009, I earned a reputation for genuine openness and approachability, broad vision, innovative leadership, and consensus-building. Along with my colleagues, village staff and members of the public, I helped not only guide our community through perplexing challenges but to also identify and take advantage of exciting opportunities.

As a policymaker, I have considerable experience in dealing with tackling daunting fiscal and budget issues, initiating innovative programs and solutions, and with the conception, design and implementation of major public works projects. As mayor, I believe that the Village Council and the residents of Downers Grove will benefit from my experience and demonstrated thought-leadership, as together we continue to confront unique opportunities and challenges.

My complete resume of prior public and community service can be found here: <http://martintully.com/2.nr>

Thank you for your interest in my campaign for Mayor of Downers Grove. Please let me know if you have any further questions.