

VERSAILLES CITY COUNCIL 2020 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Following are answers offered by the candidates running for Versailles City Council.
Please note that Mary Bradley is also a candidate but had not responded as of publication.

Q.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE MAIN ECONOMIC PILLARS OF VERSAILLES, AND WOODFORD COUNTY?

MIKE COLEMAN:

I would say manufacturing is a big one. Sylvania unfortunately is no longer here, but More Than A Bakery moved here recently, and we have Ruggles Sign Company along with several other manufacturers. In Woodford County generally, we also have big new arrivals like Lakeshore Learning and American Howa KY.

In terms of retail, Kroger also has a pretty big economic impact. I'm not saying we need a Walmart, but I wish we had something to replace KMart. We almost got Rural King in the old Kroger complex. We're working to get another store in there.

Tourism has started to have an economic impact and the new hotel contributes to that. KCTCS and Falling Springs are also important contributors to the Versailles economy.

AARON SMITHER:

I haven't seen the tax revenue balance sheets but I think that would be an important barometer. From my observations I would say manufacturing is an important pillar. I'd also say the bourbon industry is becoming increasingly important. And though I haven't been closely connected to it, I believe the horse industry has an economic impact. Both bourbon and horses are connected to tourism, which I believe is another industry that's growing in importance here. Tourism is something I'm passionate about and I think our county and city are uniquely positioned to provide a great experience for visitors.

LISA JOHNSON:

The main economic pillars are: Work-

force, Jobs, Government, and Infrastructure.

CHRIS BOWLING:

I think the main economic pillars for Versailles are tourism, both for the equine and bourbon industries. For the rest of the county, agriculture has always been the mainstay.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

Manufacturing and banks are strong here. So those jobs and that tax base are big pillars.

KCTCS also has a big impact and provides good jobs. I'm still pushing them to add a Versailles satellite campus. We have so many campuses in the surrounding counties, why not have a campus here where the headquarters is?

The Falling Springs facility has a big impact and brings people into town. And before, I would have said Osram Sylvania was a big factor in our economy, but of course that's gone now. Our mom and pop shops are important to what we're doing here, including things like the new bourbon bar. The investments around Court Street by Alex Riddle and his partners in revitalizing those buildings has been great. The downtown streetscape and having great police and fire go a long way in encouraging economic stability. Also, we probably have one of the lowest tax rates in our regions for our services.

LAURA DAKE:

Versailles and Woodford County's economy is fairly diversified. There are somewhat higher numbers employed in manufacturing/industry, but close

behind are health care and social services and the agricultural sector. Many residents also work in education as well as in public administration (government) jobs. Prior to COVID-19, Woodford County had a burgeoning tourism industry and one can expect more jobs in this sector once the pandemic is over.

GARY JONES:

Lexington.

Just kidding.

But I will say, as a realtor I see people moving here to get out of Lexington. We have a good reputation, as does our school system, even if the cost of living is equal or more expensive than Lexington. But those people continue to work and shop in Lexington.

My point here is we're losing that tax base, in terms of payroll tax. We're getting the property tax but that's close to break even. And we need more retail here; retail isn't really an economic pillar here.

So in terms of what we do have, I'd say a manufacturing base. The factories and blue collar jobs are a mainstay.

More than a Bakery was a great addition. I was glad to see Quad Graphics was sold and they're retaining employees, and hope to add more. I was glad to see the Osram Sylvania facility was bought, even if they haven't got a tenant yet. I think Ruggles Sign is amazing in how much they've expanded; they're international, and that's pretty much homegrown. That's a great story.



DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC PLANNING POLICIES TO FURTHER ECONOMIC GROWTH IN VERSAILLES?

MIKE COLEMAN:

I think some important things would be a more serious career development program, maybe even a vocational school. Also adding some more retail, and having a plan to fill a Sylvania plant, which is one of the largest vacant manufacturing facilities in the state.

I think it'd be great to have some policies that encourage filling up the downtown storefronts. The downtown pavilion suggestion came out of a good bit of research we did into economic drivers.

I think it'd be great if the EDA had some kind of strategic plan so they have a road map to follow. In the past, we've tended to wait for something to happen, but I think we can be more proactive.

I hope to sit down with the mayor, the EDA, and some local orgs and employers to put together some concepts for what we want to see in the future. In the end, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

AARON SMITHER:

I'm a very grassroots kind of guy, and I believe when you've got a good product, it sells itself. I think Versailles should be able to sell itself, we just need to have a good plan. We already have a head start, when you consider the new arrivals, people like the Quiggs who chose Versailles for More Than A Bakery.

But I don't think there has been a full-time initiative to create a plan and a vision, where we look at what our community is now, and what we'd like it to look like in 5-10 years. I think we should have a committee or task force where we get several parties at the table, EDA, Chamber, tourism, local government and other groups, realizing everyone has a slightly different vision but picking out the common denominators. We all have contacts, ideas, and relationships we can leverage.

Last year with Tourism we did a familiarization tour, "fam tour," and learned that even people in our own backyard weren't aware of everything we had. We could expand that concept to more outside groups.

I also believe we should get more professional services and white collar jobs in Versailles, and that could increase tax revenues more quickly.

I also heard an interesting concept for the Sylvania plant, or part of it, on the question of where bottles and barrels are made for the bourbon industry.

Could we do some of that there?

But basically I believe that having a tactical plan for developing the economy would be a great idea. I believe in planning the work and working the plan.

LISA JOHNSON:

A) Workforce- Versailles needs a healthy, educated, and appropriately skilled workforce. According to the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, "4 Pillars of Prosperity (2019)", the availability of a workforce with the right skills is a critical concern. In fact, 15% of jobs require "low skills", 27% of jobs demand "high skills" but 58% of new jobs in today's market require "middle skills", defined as jobs requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree*. While many of Woodford County's students are college-ready at graduation, we could do more to help our students be middle-skills career-ready by expanding workforce preparation, apprenticeships, and internships.

B) Jobs- we could enhance/diversify our business environment in Versailles by recognizing the strength of our agricultural landscape and the proximity of our town to highways and larger cities. We should encourage more entrepreneurial and tech or professional service industries with higher paying wages to balance the number of lower-paying,

hourly wage jobs in our community.

*Source Cited: <https://www.kychamber.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/4%20Pillars%202019.pdf>

CHRIS BOWLING:

In general, my ultimate goal is to grow Versailles sustainably. Creating a stable economic climate, with lower taxes and less regulation for new interested businesses is a must.

I believe we can build a better civic structure, so we can leverage municipal resources to support our new and existing businesses, and inspire interest in Versailles.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

Just constantly talking to different businesses and getting our name out there, letting people know that we're open for business.

For example, there's no reason whatsoever why we can't have a Chick-Fil-A. I know there's a little under 10,000 people in the city, but 62,000 people travel by the bypass everyday. There's no reason not to have more activity in that area.

I think we need to work on getting more high-end manufacturing facilities in this town, like More Than A Bakery. We definitely need to make sure we get somebody to fill the shoes of Osram Sylvania.

Also, we've got to get a new hospital. The lawsuit blocking that development at Edgewood is unfortunate. I don't know what the worry is, because I would call that infill development. I agree to disagree agreeably with the folks behind that lawsuit; I know a lot of those people and I don't hold anything against them. But if we ever lose that hospital, we're never getting another manufacturing job here, because manufacturers need to know there's a local hospital.

Plus, a big beautiful hospital would-

bring in more jobs and more tax base. And a new hospital won't go anywhere because it would be a 30-50 year investment.

That said, we don't need to turn into Lexington or Georgetown, but we do need planned, controlled growth.

LAURA DAKE:

Very early this year, no one could have imagined the impact the coronavirus would have on our economy. I believe that our planning must first consider helping stabilize those small and large businesses ---- and their employees -- who are being hit particularly hard by the coronavirus pandemic. We did this in a small way over the summer when we approved approximately \$400,000 of the city's share of CARES money for small business and residents impacted by closure orders and job loss.

As we move forward, I am particularly interested in diversifying our economy even more by encouraging companies to come to Versailles that provide jobs in high-tech or high-skill fields like information technology; biomedicine; agri-tech; engineering/architecture; and professional services, as examples. Perhaps an area already slated for the development (and already in the Urban Service Boundary) could be dubbed as a high-tech, zero emissions industrial park of sorts where there are several smaller companies clustered together which take up far less land than traditional manufacturing and provide good-paying jobs that are mostly high-skilled. (There might be an added benefit, too, of bringing young people back to Versailles after college.) This way, if a company is forced to move or goes out of business, the hit to the area isn't as severe as a large manufacturing plant that does the same thing.

GARY JONES:

Until we decide to get some more retail here, things aren't going to change that much. That's my main goal. We need more retail that would keep people working and playing here and not in Lexington.

It needs to be controlled growth, though; I don't want to become a Nicholasville or a Georgetown. But we can't be afraid of growth.

There's an old axiom, if you're not growing you're dying. I think that's true.



ANY THOUGHTS ON HOW TO RETAIN EXISTING COMPANIES AND EXISTING JOBS?

MIKE COLEMAN:

I think the EDA and Chamber can help with this issue too. I was on the EDA and I believe this could become a bigger part of their mission. One specific thing I can point in terms of helping retain local businesses is the CARES act money that we received. Many other cities put that money right back in their general fund to help with a drop in tax revenue caused by the pandemic. But we instead created a grant program that I helped oversee and gave it back out to local businesses who applied. We distributed \$433,000 of CARES act funds. One other thing I've been looking at with the Finance Committee I'm on is come up with taxation solutions so companies pay their fair share. Some of the larger chain businesses have accounting practices that eliminate their tax obligations, while local businesses are paying much more. I think making this more fair would help.

AARON SMITHER:

I think a plan to retain existing companies and the existing job base would be an integral part of an overall economic strategy. In the last 6 months there's been more collaboration between local groups and local government than ever before. I think you put a lot of these ideas on the table with local government, Tourism, Chamber, groups like Woodford Forward, and really get into the weeds on the gaps that currently exist. I don't know if anyone could have anticipated Sylvania leaving; I don't know exactly what the issue was. That may have happened no matter what we did, but we need a plan to keep employers like that as long as we can.

LISA JOHNSON:

If I were to be elected to Council, I would want to convene a forum (virtual or in-person) so the council could

actually hear directly from new and existing businesses about how they are doing, especially due to coronavirus disruptions, and ask them what they need. Versailles is a perfect-sized town with excellent access to US60, I-75 and I-64. One of the challenges I have heard in past community forums is the lack of affordable, attractive housing. Creating more housing options (first through revitalization and re-purposing) would allow people who work in our manufacturing businesses and service industry to live in the town where they work.

CHRIS BOWLING:

Our smaller shops, that rely on foot traffic alone, may need to create an online store-front. This would increase exposure and ease safety concerns. It's also critical that we make as many people aware of how and why they should support local business.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

Retention is absolutely important. The mayor and I have several ideas on this topic. We have some ideas for creative tax incentives, and I think it's important to keep in regular contact with existing employers to talk about possibilities for expansion. When I was mayor, I was the only mayor to ever fly to Germany and visit Osram Sylvania to thank them. The mother company is Siemens, is a multi-billion dollar company. We pushed them to expand and they appreciated us. Eventually they opened up the distribution center, adding another 110 jobs. But the city council has to weigh in on this, because in the end the mayor doesn't have a vote unless it's a tie-breaker. We also need to make sure there are enough shopping opportunities in Versailles that people don't feel the need to go to Lexington for stuff we don't have, because once they're there, they often shop at other places in Lex-

ington that have things we DO have in Versailles. That's one way to keep people here.

LAURA DAKE:

Certainly every local government is eager to retain employers and jobs. Economic incentives might encourage a company to stay or to keep its labor force at a certain level, but if that company is moving its operations, closing its doors for good or is being told by its corporate headquarters to downsize its workforce, in reality there is only so much a city can do. The best way to retain employers is to capitalize on Woodford County's best assets like great schools and quality of life, an educated workforce, beautiful natural environment, a strong chamber supporting businesses and easy proximity to Lexington, Louisville and Cincinnati and beyond via major interstates. Finally, with the county's low unemployment rate, having workers available with the skills necessary to do the jobs is critical.

GARY JONES:

I think that's important, but to do that we need to retain our talented people and not lose them to Lexington. If companies cannot find employees, then they won't stay. More Than a Bakery was having trouble getting employees and had to actually cut a shift and lay off 40 people because they could not find an additional 40 people. We do get people in from surrounding counties, but you get virtually nobody from Lexington. The problem is that people in Lexington perceive Versailles as being too far away. That's just a perception. But that's why the factories here have trouble getting people from Lexington to apply. Somehow, some way, we have to be able to get more workers in this county for our employers. We need to conceive of some policies on that front.



AGRICULTURE IS A HUGE PART OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY HERE. 1 IN 3 JOBS IN THE COUNTY IS AG-RELATED WITH A \$565 MILLION-DOLLAR/YEAR ANNUAL IMPACT. DO YOU HAVE ANY THOUGHTS ON HOW TO LEVERAGE THE AG INDUSTRY WITHIN VERSAILLES CITY LIMITS? (“NO” IS ACCEPTABLE ANSWER HERE)

MIKE COLEMAN:

I believe agriculture is still relevant, but it has been diminishing for years in its impact on the economy. That said, I would like for us to tap into the ag industry more, because it’s still here, we have farmers, we have the skills, knowledge, and land.

When I was on EDA, we were looking at the possibility of a hemp processing facility on the Edgewood property, which would help with the local ag sector. We also had a potential investor who proposed coming in to grow grains around the county that could be sold to local businesses (e.g. More Than a Bakery) and the distilleries, which helps the ag sector while eliminating delays and shipping costs for the processors.

At one point in time we had an agritech company looking at Midway station, which we were excited by because that’s something we’re lacking here. If you look at an agritech company like Alltech, their economic impact is big and global. So I think ag should be considered in our economic development plans.

AARON SMITHER:

I’ve tried to put on the lens of city council in focusing on what’s going on here in city limits, and there’s not a lot of ag land in city limits. So off the top of my head, I don’t have any ideas, but I think this is definitely a sector we can focus on because it does have a real impact. This goes back to my statement earlier about getting people together in a way that hasn’t been done before and hashing it out in a plan. COVID has changed a lot of things and made a lot of people uncomfortable, me being one of them, but it has caused us to start looking at things in ways we never have before and the ag sector is part of this picture. Knowing the reach of the industry, I do want to look into this more and get more information. I think ag definitely

deserves a seat at the table. I mean, we have Alltech one county over and they’ve been huge for Nicholasville. I also know that James Kay was recently appointed to the governor’s Agritech advisory council and I think that’s something we can leverage.

LISA JOHNSON:

The key words here are “within city limits”. When we think of the agriculture cluster, it is not just the farms, but all of the Ag Industry’s supporting services like food processing, ag manufacturing, finance & payroll, veterinary, recreation, wholesale, and retail businesses that are located inside the Urban Services Boundary. I am also a big fan of the Farm-to-Table movement, Farmer’s Markets, and our local “Farm Stores”. We need to encourage, incentivize, promote and support these programs and ALL of our local farmers. Someday, it would be awesome to hold a Farm-To-Table Harvest Supper with long tables placed down a section of Main Street, perhaps between the Courthouse and City Hall, with proceeds from ticket sales going to support local farmers. Finally, our city officials should visit, understand, and talk about our local Ag industry businesses to anyone who will listen at the local, state and federal level.

CHRIS BOWLING:

Possibly an “urban agricultural” ordinance could help the industry inside city limits. Implementing a stronger local food supply, with community gardens in our vacant parcels, food trucks, farmer’s markets, and detailed zoning that focuses on these ideas.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

We’ve got Woodford Feed in the city limits, we’ve got the farmers market, our bourbon industry is second to none, and our horse industry is unparalleled. But to really get inside the city

limits, I think there are things we could do with hemp and hemp processing, for example. CBD oil manufacturing is a great business. Expanding the bourbon industry, and doing subsidiaries off of businesses that we already have, be it a blood horse agent, or a byproduct of bourbon. I mean, look at Pearse Lyons; Alltech has been huge for Nicholasville. We’re constantly thinking about options like that.

LAURA DAKE:

My answer to Question 2 touches on this. Smaller agri-tech firms – firms that use technology in agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture to improve yields and efficiency – would be a great addition to a high-tech industrial park. The jobs created would likely pay more than some other jobs in the ag sector as well. The city might explore state incentives related to the agricultural sector to bring companies here that would potentially add value to Woodford’s (and Kentucky’s) agricultural products and stimulate markets for those products.

GARY JONES:

This is an important issue and we are talking about some ideas in local government. Economically, I think we could do more with tourism, to get people to come here and visit the horse farms. They’re a huge draw and they all have tours. I don’t think we really utilize that as much as we should, and I think some of those tours ought to start in Versailles. Right now they all originate in Lexington. Could we have our own tour company and visitors center here? We have a good tourism commission so perhaps they could push that even more.

Also on the ag front, since the farmers market has moved to the old Kroger lot, they’ve drastically increased their business, by more than 300% from

what I understand. And it's because of parking. For better or for worse, parking's important to people. We've added so many more vendors to the farmers market in that time as well. That in itself is bringing money and economic value to the area.

But unfortunately general ag is declining every year, and it's probably going to continue to drop. The big farms conglomerates across the world, "Big Ag," have kept prices artificially low by doing things at massive scale.

What's the long-term economic outlook on our local general ag farms? I don't think it's good, and I wish I had an answer.



DO YOU HAVE ANY POLICY IDEAS TO PROMOTE INFILL AND RE-DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE VERSAILLES USB? THIS WAS AN OBJECTIVE OF THE 2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. (“NO” IS ACCEPTABLE ANSWER HERE)

MIKE COLEMAN:

At this point, I have no firm policy ideas for how to approach this, but it’s something I’m constantly thinking about because it’s important. This is something that our economic development groups should work on; we don’t really have any written down or formulated strategy. One small policy impact could come from the possibility of a granny flat (ADU) ordinance, allowing people to build smaller dwellings on their existing lot, but that would only make sense if it had carefully planned restrictions and is managed properly.

AARON SMITHER:

I think it all goes back to education. Especially in good governance, and being a good citizen, a fundamental issue is using resources wisely. That said, I don’t think the government should be in a position where we’re telling a business owner where they should locate. Also, from a business standpoint, renovating is often more expensive than new construction, that has to be a deciding factor. Perhaps we could have tax or financial incentives to encourage use of existing assets. More generally though, I don’t want to end up looking like a Nicholasville or a Georgetown with our development pattern. I think we have too much great stuff to offer here without needing to go in that direction.

LISA JOHNSON:

How many people travel through Versailles on their way to the Bourbon Trail (in a non-Covid year) but go elsewhere to eat, drink and stay? Versailles needs to capture more of this tourism revenue in Versailles (and Midway) and not lose it to our big city neighbors by revitalizing shopping areas (UHaul/old Kmart) and repurposing some of our older, dilapidated buildings. We should make all entrances coming into (and out of) Versailles as inviting as

possible by implementing attractive landscaping, using 4-board fencing to continue our agricultural theme, and installing appropriate and attractive way-finding signs. I suggest we invite all stakeholders including public officials, property owner(s), bankers, business persons and neighbors to form “citizen assemblies”, getting together via Zoom or other socially-distanced forum(s) if necessary, to talk about shared visions for redesigning prominent spaces so these spaces are productive, attractive, and supported.

CHRIS BOWLING:

I don’t have policy ideas for this at this time.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

I think good, creative tax incentives and new ideas to entice more businesses would help. I think we have infill space that we can use, without a doubt, to add some really great employers. A perfect example is the old middle school lot. That’s empty and would be a perfect spot for any large business or a business incubator. I’ve definitely got a lot of ideas for things like that; it shouldn’t be an empty void there.

I’ll give you another example, adjacent to the Bluegrass hospital, off Preston Court (where you’d go right); a lot of that property’s available now. And of course if we get a new hospital, that whole entire space could be used. Also, years ago we worked on the streetscape and got some grants, so if your downtown building was going to cost \$10K to renovate, all you’d pay is \$5K. We need those types of ideas. I’d like to see a great employer, a company like Patagonia for example. They have amazing childcare on site, and they even have a sickbay so if your child is sick the parent can still come to work. People around here would love benefits like that, even if it’s just hubs

or subsidiaries of larger companies.

LAURA DAKE:

There are several areas within the Versailles USB that would be appropriate for infill and redevelopment. I am not aware of all the incentives (like tax credits) available to persons and companies interested in redeveloping an underutilized or blighted property and it might serve the city / EDA / chamber to look into these and publish what is available. In addition to the idea of a small high-tech industrial park described above, companies wanting to come to Versailles – and in particular ones that don’t require a lot of acreage – might be incentivized to build on previously-developed land or to carve out a place on a piece of open land that is surrounded by other industries. We simply can’t ignore the cumulative effect of rampant development on our public services and quality of life, and I believe we should use what we have before expanding our boundaries.

GARY JONES:

I’d love to see the infill. But first I’d like to really know how much land is available for infill. And then I think this goal has to be someone’s job. Would it not be up to the EDA or someone like that to help bring retail or small business into Versailles?

When we’re talking about this kind of thing, we’re generally talking about infill with businesses, which means they have to be grown organically or we have to bring them in. We need the EDA or someone like that to help us to do that.

And honestly, you can’t infill with giant factories; they have to be smaller companies, offices or lighter industry. Somebody that has the contacts needs to go out and do that. They need to be focused on different areas, not just big factories.



DO YOU SUPPORT THE STUDY OF A MERGER OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT WITH ONE OR MORE OF THE CITY GOVERNMENTS? (YES OR NO IS ACCEPTABLE, ELABORATE IF YOU WISH)

MIKE COLEMAN:

Yes, I would support the study of a merger to see what the possibilities are. When I was on the EDA, we saw so many duplications of services. We've done a good job with the police and fire services, but it'd be great to see where else we could do this.

AARON SMITHER:

Sure. There's always lots of "yes, but" issues with this kind of idea, but I don't know why anyone wouldn't want to consider potential efficiencies to be gained for studying this. The outcome might be that things are fine as they are, but it never hurts to look.

LISA JOHNSON:

· Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) has: 16 paid, elected officials for 323,152 citizens (2019 Population Census Data), which is 1 paid public official:20,197 citizens.
· Woodford County has 23 paid, elected officials for 26,734 citizens (2019 Population Census Data) which is 1 paid public official:1,162 citizens.
What do you think?

CHRIS BOWLING:

Yes, combining our efforts as one community will promote the best possible outcome.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

Always have. I would support a study. I think in practice a total merger could easily save all Woodford Countians \$1 million - \$2 million a year. And at the end of the day, there's no question it would save money on police and fire; we already know that. We used to have a 14.5 minute response time, and now it's a few minutes. To be clear, I'm not knocking the volunteers at all, they're fantastic, but having 24/7 services makes your response time really fast. When we did the police merger it saved everyone money.

If you were going to do a complete merger, you'd put it on a referendum, and you'd only consider it if it was going to save Woodford Countians money, which I think it would. Typically, the city would take over the county if it passed. It would all fall into one city government, and a mayor. And then instead of having 6 council members and 8 magistrates, you'd have maybe a total of 12-14 to represent their districts, just like LFUCG.

Midway is their own entity; if you did a referendum, it would probably include them, but we'd have to see.

LAURA DAKE:

I would support a study. The number of city and county elected officials in Woodford County (23) far exceeds the 16 elected officials who serve Fayette County, a county with 12 times the population of Woodford. Not counting the executive leadership, this means that one official in Fayette represents close to 25,000 people; in Woodford, it is one official for about 1,300 people! I am not advocating one way or the other because it is a complicated issue – especially with two cities in the county – and mergers aren't easy. I also appreciate the accountability the different government bodies have towards the others as well as the push and pull on issues that affect city and county residents alike. Too few officials could mean that too few citizen voices are heard. Still, the potential cost savings and efficiencies of a merged government cannot be ignored, and I would support exploring the issue.

GARY JONES:

Yes, I'd support a study like that. From a business standpoint, I think there's so much duplication of work, and we could save so much money if jobs were combined. There's a lot of economic savings that would be available.



DO YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE THE EXTENSION OF FALLING SPRINGS BLVD. AT OR NEAR U.S. 62? THIS IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS THE VERSAILLES NW BYPASS (ONE WORD ANSWER IS ACCEPTABLE, ELABORATE IF YOU WISH)

MIKE COLEMAN:

In principle yes. Anything we can do to get big trucks off Main Street. I don't really care how it's done, but am open to solutions. I would see this primarily as a traffic solution, and maybe it would have some potential for economic development. The money for a large bypass doesn't appear to be available and I doubt it will be anytime soon. There may be smaller, less expensive versions of a bypass that could help with the traffic issues and have lower long-term maintenance costs. I would also support the idea of a flyover at the BG Parkway where it turns left onto 60, which would help with traffic flow, especially if trucks could turn left there.

AARON SMITHER:

Based on what I know as of today, I wouldn't support that. My position is that on any major new road build, of any size or parameters, we need to ask, have we completely exhausted all other options on the table, and ruled them all in or out? Also based on what I know today, I would support an improvement of the left turn where the Bluegrass Parkway goes onto 60, be it a flyover or another solution.

LISA JOHNSON:

Oppose.

CHRIS BOWLING:

Support. I would also support improvements at the left turn from the Bluegrass Parkway onto 60.

FRED SIEGELMAN:

I know that's a touchy issue. We really didn't have a dog in that fight directly. And I'm not trying to pass the buck, but what I've always thought is you should do is whatever the majority of your constituency wants. We're there

to represent them. So if the majority of your constituency doesn't want something, you probably shouldn't be pushing for it. I'm firm in that.

So, short answer, it depends on the constituents, and it depends on the plan. There are several different versions of the bypass I've seen proposed. How they do it, where they take it through, and how many people have their property seized through eminent domain, is the real big issue. A lot of people will think, wait a minute — you can't just take my property. And you know, I'm not a big fan of eminent domain. I'm pro-stay-out-of-my-business. We just want to run the city, mind our business, and let the constituency get done what they want to get done.

I'll give you an example of that. Way back when, some people wanted to open Stourbridge, up in the Helmsley area, and I said ok, we'll take a look at that. Next thing you know, at the public meeting, 20-30 people from each nearby neighborhood showed up. They were saying, excuse me, no, this isn't about NIMBY — but I bought in this neighborhood because I love that there's only one way in, one way out. That reduces crime, because an entrance can be blocked if the police come.

And I said, I get it, this is a dead issue. I looked at the city council and I said, you all choose, but we have the majority of the constituency here, and they don't want this, so why would we push it?

So that's how I feel.

And there are other parties involved. It's as much a county issue, because the road might go through the county, plus it'd be a state road. And you've also got Midway that believes they would be affected by it.

That said, personally I don't think it

would have a huge impact on the land. If I understood it right, you'd still have farmland on either side, they would fence it, kind of like the existing connector road that goes by the middle school, with a road going through the middle of the land. You have some houses, townhomes, apartments, and some farmland, before it dead ends at Fallings Springs.

LAURA DAKE:

I oppose the extension of Falling Spring Blvd. at or near U.S. 62. Nothing I have heard or read convinces that an extension is necessary. That "heavy" traffic through downtown warrants a bypass is nonsense. I live on the south end of downtown and would never drive miles out of my way to get to the area near the high school just to avoid sitting through two cycles of a traffic light. The other argument for a bypass is keeping large trucks off downtown streets — a worthy goal but an expensive way to get there! Let's look for easier, lower-cost solutions. I have been told that the GPS systems for truck drivers coming from the BG Parkway to I-64 often route them through Versailles rather than the Route 127 bypass in Lawrenceburg. We could likely fix this. Another proposed solution is a left-turn light or a flyover at the BG Parkway and Lexington Road. I'm not sure a light is practical or safe at that location and a flyover is expensive but certainly they are options worth exploring versus spending \$40 million on a northwest bypass.

GARY JONES:

I support it. Downtown can't handle any more growth with the traffic and big trucks trying to get out to 62. The other side of that is, will it hurt downtown? Personally I don't think it will.

That said, I don't like eminent domain,

which would likely be part of any proposed bypass. That should be used wisely and not very often.

But if it were to be built, you'd have to mitigate truck traffic into Midway. I wouldn't want to see Midway hit with all that truck traffic.

With all the variables and the lack of available funding, I don't see it happening in my lifetime. It would be an expensive project and it has to be budgeted for. If there's a way to do a smaller solution that costs less, takes up less land, and still achieves the traffic goals, I think that'd be great.

I also think the left turn at BG Parkway onto 60 needs work, and if that were improved, that might help too. Something needs to be done there.