

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

When Imperial voters go to the polls for the Nov. 6 General Election, they will have three choices for the two seats that will open the end of the year.

The Imperial city council race is the only contested one facing local voters this year. All other races have either just enough candidates to fill the open seats, or are short.

City council candidates include incumbent Sue Moore, J.D. Reeder and Dan Thompson.

Each of the candidates received the same list of questions.

Council members are elected to four-year terms. They receive no salary for their positions.

Here is a little background on each of the candidates.

Sue Moore

Incumbent Sue Moore, 70, is completing her second term on the council, and has lived in Imperial for 34 years. She works as a paraprofessional for McPherron, Skiles & Loop, and is also office manager for 102.9 JackFM. Her community involvement includes Chamber of Commerce as treasurer and serving as president twice; president of VFW Ladies Auxiliary and is State Department Conductress; treasurer of Imperial Eagles Auxiliary; treasurer of Rainbow Promise Preschool; and serves on the Chase County Extension Board. She is a member of First United Methodist Church. She is a board member of the League Association of Risk Management (LARM) and was recently elected to the board of the Nebraska League of Municipalities. Her family includes three grown sons and six grandchildren.

J.D. Reeder

A 37-year resident of Imperial, J.D. Reeder, 74, also sought city council office last year. Now retired, he worked for Chase County Community Hospital in maintenance, most of them as a supervisor. He served on the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department for 29 years and was a 20-year member of the Imperial EMS. He also served 25 years on the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team for Troop D. He served as Chase County's Emergency Management Deputy Director for 29 years. He is a member of Imperial Zion Lutheran Church and a past trustee.

He and his wife, Shirley, have eight grown children, 22 grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and one great, great grandchild.

Dan Thompson

Dan Thompson, 51, has been a resident of Imperial 13 years. He had been Trooper with the Nebraska State Patrol for 25 years, and previous to that, was a Deputy Sheriff with the Dawson County Sheriff's Department for five years. Community involvement includes membership in the Imperial Rotary Club. He is a member of Imperial Zion Lutheran Church.

He and his wife, Connie, have a grown daughter who is married, a son in high school at Chase County Schools and one grandchild.

Questions to the council candidates

The three candidates were mailed a list of questions from the Imperial Republican's news department. Their responses are printed below in rotating order.

1. What is your motivation for seeking a council position?

- Moore: I have served eight years on the City Council and feel I am qualified to serve

another term, knowing most of the challenges facing the city in the upcoming four years.

- Reeder: I have lived in Imperial for 37 years and I have a passion and love for my community and desire to see positive decisions that will impact generations to come. I have been regularly attending the City Council meetings for four years and I am very interested in seeing the council work in the best interest of the general public's wants and needs.

- Thompson: Small communities, such as Imperial, rely on members to fulfill leadership roles. After being a resident for 13 years I feel that I have the knowledge needed to take on a leadership position in the community. It is my belief that I have a perspective that might allow for a different view for the positive direction the community is headed. Having been approached by respected community members and encouraged to run, I have decided to seek a position on the city council.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenge(s) facing the city in the coming four years?

- Reeder: Affordable housing.

- Thompson: Imperial hasn't seen the economic downturn that much of the country has faced. I feel we need to work hard to ensure that we do not fall into the same economic hardships. Imperial needs to be promoted to draw in new businesses/industry to continue the growth that we have seen.

- Moore: The upcoming challenges I can see are promoting Cornerstone properties, getting the infrastructure done, rental housing, new fire barn and street repair.

3. Nuisance ordinances have continued to be a contentious issue at times. Do you believe the city is on the right track in how it's being handled now—e.g. using West Central Neb. Development District as its nuisance officer in enforcing the codes, and why? Would you suggest any changes to the process?

- Thompson: I feel we all should be proud of our community and take pride in presenting it in the best light possible. The nuisance ordinances help us to do this. I think the enforcement of the nuisance ordinances needs to be done by an impartial third party, such as West Central Nebraska Development District. However, more consistency and uniformity in the enforcement is needed.

- Moore: I feel that West Central NE Development District is doing a great job in getting our nuisances cleaned up. We all want a clean, presentable city and we are on the right track in enforcing the codes. WCNDD is unbiased, doesn't know who lives where, making it entirely random. You would think there would be self-motivation, but some just need a little boost.

- Reeder: I do feel properly implemented nuisance ordinances can be very beneficial to our community and protect property values. I would like to see our current nuisance ordinances enforced with the following changes: 1) Use a local officer to enforce the current ordinance. 2)

This local officer could keep check on our community and if that officer sees a problem go directly to the property owner and visit face to face versus taking pictures from the alley and sending a letter. 3) Work hard to treat all land owners equally.

4. What are your ideas for improving housing availability in Imperial? Do you support recent action by the council giving incentives (e.g. the water/sewer/elec. tap fee waivers, reduced lot prices at Cornerstone) to developers of housing, and why?

- Moore: I feel that PRIME is doing a fantastic job in promoting rental housing in Imperial. I was not in favor of waiving tap fees, etc. to all new construction. I was in favor of waiving for new construction if it was to be rental property. I feel personal residential and commercial should pay their own hook-up fees, like all homeowners and businesses have done in the past.

- Reeder: I think the City Council is on the right track by giving these incentives to new housing building projects. In the long run we should get our money back in property taxes. I appreciate that individuals and Community entities have been working on coming up with ways to make the cost of new construction work for the demands of what the market will bear for local rental rates. I feel our city's LB840 Economic Development moneys would be an excellent source of funds in these new construction and/or rehab projects.

- Thompson: Adequate housing has been an issue for the entire tenure of my residency in Imperial. We experienced first hand the difficulty in finding a place to live when relocating to Imperial in 1999. There has not been much interest in building housing for rentals during the time I have lived here. The recent action by the city council has started interest by parties wanting to invest in Imperial. Without suitable housing being available it will be difficult for Imperial to grow.

5. Do you have any ideas on how to better promote the city of Imperial, to improve economic development? Explain.

- Reeder: I appreciate that we are using technology to promote and educate people, especially young people about all of the positive things Imperial has to offer. We have to continue to support our good schools, churches, our community hospital, volunteer fire department, EMS and our low crime rates, and our friendly people. Imperial is truly a great place to raise a family.

- Thompson: Imperial has had some success using a community development director to promote and seek economic development. While searching for a new director, we need to seek the best person for the position to aid in the growth of our community. The return of young families to our community has been a positive move. The promotion of our community and its residents can speak volumes about who we are and what we stand for, a great place to live and raise a family.

- Moore: We have had a struggle in promoting economic development because we are “out west.” Leslie Carlholm did an absolute wonderful job in getting the word out about Imperial and the Cornerstone property. I think we will see some development going on in the near future, thanks to Leslie’s contacts. As far as promoting the City of Imperial, word of mouth, Chase County Economic Development Committee attending different fairs, etc.

6. Imperial’s city sales tax dollars are to be spent on economic development or community development projects. Do you have any specific project(s) in mind for use of those dollars?

- Thompson: The recent street project on the east side of town is something that people coming to our community for school activities, swim meets or the county fair can see that we are investing in our community. Continued work on the infrastructure of our community is necessary to support the growth we would like to see. Anything that would promote or enhance Imperial would be a good use of these funds.

- Moore: We hope to spend some of the sales tax dollars on new rental housing as well as infrastructure in the Cornerstone property. The funds are there for community development and economic development which if the opportunity arises we can go forward.

- Reeder: Not at the present time. I feel as a City Councilman I would want to make sure we continue to appoint boards and committees that will continue to bring forth their recommendations of the best use of our LB840 monies to best stimulate our economic development.

7. Taxes always seem to be on people’s minds. List one way you would suggest for reducing taxes felt by Imperial residents.

- Moore: I really can’t see any possible way to reduce taxes at this point in time.

- Reeder: I do appreciate the many services that we have in Imperial. If you reduce taxes you will also have to cut services. As a City Council we will continually evaluate the city budget and assess the various programs.

- Thompson: Taxes always have been and will continue be an area in which there is much debate and discussion. Looking at where tax revenues are being spent is the first thing that needs to be looked at before discussion about taxes being cut can be addressed. Once this is done, we need to prioritize the needs and wants for the community and look at the costs associated with them. A budget can then be drawn up which balances the need for services with the desire to reduce taxes. It will be my desire to ensure residents that we are getting the most for our tax dollars.