

Candidate Forum Mayor 4/24/2014

Question 1

[Loralea Prothro Seale](#)

On the topic of listening to residents and representing the town as a whole, please describe your personal standards/beliefs and how they guide your decision making process.



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) My personal standard begins with the idea that I will always do my best to do what is right for this town. If that includes spending many hours learning/researching/negotiating, that is what I will do. And I will always be honest. I feel that I make myself very available to all people in town, either on my walks, at events, or just around. I don't think there is anyone who has asked to meet with me that I have not done my best to accommodate.

I do my best at all times to answer calls/emails. I know there are some who say I don't but there are times when several things come up at once and I miss one. There are also times when I try to answer and receive a very unpleasant response so I don't feel there is a need to continue the dialogue. At times I will forward a request on to the Town Manager as he may be the appropriate one to answer since we are very clearly chartered to be a Council/Manager form of government and it is not appropriate for us to be involved in some employee situations. The manager is very good about responding to all requests. Finally, I often see a note addressed to the entire Council and if one person responds with a valid answer, I assume that is resolved. Perhaps that is not satisfactory, I can try to respond regardless.

Regarding decision-making, I will always listen to all sides, look at the facts, research the possibilities and do what is in the best interest of the future of Trophy Club.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Every citizen should be treated with respect no matter their opinions. It was my policy while I was mayor to always respond to every phone call or email in a timely manner. If I did not have the answer to their question or concern, I would let them know I would get back to them and not leave them in limbo. I try to treat the residents with the same respect I hope they in return would treat me.

This same policy is applicable to Staff. As a MUD Director and as a former, I try to treat all employees courteously.

As I make decisions I consider the fact that if several citizens contacted me about an issue, there must be many more that have concerns but never took the time to express their thoughts to me.

Question 2

[Alice Holliman Murphy](#)

Both of you have been mayor in Trophy Club at one time. What do you consider your worst decision as Mayor and what would you differently to correct that decision?



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) When I was first Mayor I had come from the MUD and we always seemed to find a consensus. The first time I was reviewing the Town Manager (past manager) I felt we also had to have a consensus and unfortunately gave someone a very difficult time over it. I felt it set a terrible tone for my role, fracturing the Council and hurt a dear friend. I since have tried to recognize that it is fine for people to have opposing votes. I try to treat everyone with respect and ensure their message is heard. We have done a lot of work to build a sense of team among the Council and learn how to work together. That does not mean to agree all the time, but to allow for honest discussion and differences. That is usually the way to come to the best solutions.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Early in my tenure as Mayor, the town was approached by a Hotel Developer about building at the Trophy Wood Center where the allowable use was already part of the Zoning. (The zoning was done before I was Mayor.) The brand was a Holiday Inn Express and I felt we would prefer a full service hotel as opposed to what was being offered. I met with the developer and kept requesting upgrades to the facility like full service restaurant and meeting rooms. Those items were not required, but thought if I kept asking they would build something better. What happened is that they went away. As I look back on it, maybe I should have been happy with a Holiday Inn Express. What I learned from this is to try to find out from other cities how they control things like this and review our ordinances. Don't think I would not push a developer to do a better job, but sure learned from this.

Question 3

[Tom Kolter](#)

Last April 22, 2013, after receiving about \$38,000 for dirt remediation on an insurance claim, the Town Manager advised the City Council that the steps taken by MUD to clean up the sewerage were sufficient, and that the dirt under the police station did not need to be removed.

What did the City do about this \$38,000 it received from the insurance company for the Town claim that did not really exist?

I have heard that it spent the money on other things and did not notify the insurance company, and simply kept the \$38,000.

What role did Connie White have in all this, and what would Nick Sanders have done?



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) I am afraid you have heard wrong. The money from the insurance company was used to repair the damage to the building and fix some other issues in the building. This was all done with the complete knowledge and approval of the insurance company and was totally appropriate. It is sad to me that some people will go to any lengths to discredit people. In this case, someone even called the insurance company trying to make us look poorly – to what end? It is interesting that people will go outside our town and make us look bad, just to prove a point.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Insurance money is to be used for that which was on the claim. If the work was not done, then the Town should have contacted TML in writing and get their input or approval to use the funds for other purpose.

Question 4

[Shirley Ervin Hase](#)

Thank you for your answers. If Prop 2 does not pass, and you are mayor, what alternatives will you be considering in regards to two buildings



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) If Prop 2 does not pass, we will go back to the drawing board. The new Council will of course decide as a whole, but we will be evaluating whether to move forward with two separate buildings/issues on the ballot in November, which we know would be more costly, or to further refine the joint building design and perhaps involve others in the design.

We have already evaluated other options and found that there is not good property for the size of what we need, and the current space, even if the MUD were to decide they did not need it, does not have enough parking. We have contacted the Methodist Church on multiple occasions and they are not willing to sell any property.

Something interesting....when I look back to when we originally built the MUD building, many said it was too large, how would we ever need the space. Well that was 30 years ago and we as a Town have been very fortunate to have had the facility to share, though we have far outgrown it. It represented long term planning and that is what we are trying to do here. Build for our future.

Finally, one point I would like to clarify. There are those who are concerned about the debt. I saw mention of Dave Ramsey. While I totally agree with him on a personal level, it is not possible to save for something like this on a municipal level. It is against the law to collect taxes to just save the money. Having the debt is the only way to do it and this is a good time for that. But whatever the voters decide, we will work with it



[C Nick Sanders](#) Shirley, I think the first thing to do is to try to understand why it

did not pass. Was it an issue with doubling our town debt, the location, the combined building concept, lack of communication to the citizens, or etc. I do think we need a new Police facility and more space for both Police and Town Staff. I stated at a past council meeting that I thought the council should wait to call the election until more issues were vetted and communicated to the citizens. At this point, more information is going to be presented on May 1st and we will have had 4 days of early voting. Risky if you want more support.

Communicate with our citizens needs to be improved on this topic and others. We need to be more open and make it easy for citizens to get information and provide input.

The decision for keeping the buildings together at this point has been made for this Bond Election. There are cost savings if they are together, but not sure about their proposed design. The success of this bond election is dependent on communication, and I would have delayed the placing this item on the ballot until more information had been released.

Question 5

[Tracey Hunter](#)

Thank you both for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in tonight's forum.

As you know Highway 114 is just a mess now during commute due to a traffic study performed years ago. The current road structure is unacceptable. What will you do to work with TXDOT to solve the problems we are experiencing?



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) I am glad you asked that question. Believe me I am just as frustrated as you. But here is what we have done.... I spoke with the new Transportation Commissioner for North Texas at a recent I35W meeting, explaining our issues and inability to get the needed focus. Actually earlier Mike had spoken with Andy Eads our County Commissioner and he has been working on it also. Then Laura Wheat and myself talked to State Rep Capriglione asking him to get involved. He set up a meeting with TC/Westlake and Roanoke, Andy Eads, and TXDOT representatives. We discussed the issues, there were about 6 that we saw as a significant danger. We all discussed the pros and cons of potential solutions. TXDOT promised to further evaluate the possibilities and move as quickly as possible. They subsequently have done some restriping and signage adjustments for immediate relief on certain parts. The big issue however, will take more time. They are looking at adding a third lane between that intersection and Kirkwood, where the highway is already 3 lanes. This looks like it will be a go, but will likely take about 1 ½ years. That seems long, but in TXDOT highway time it really is fast. We are very happy that the individuals from TXDOT really listened to us, recognized the issues and are doing their best to resolve them. We will continue that conversation and keep the focus on the solutions.



[C Nick Sanders](#) In my first term as Mayor I was concerned with traffic at Trophy Lake drive and began to investigate the issue. There was a design for the Hwy

114 / 170 interchange that had been done prior to the widening of Hwy 114 through Southlake and Westlake. With the construction of the DFW Connector through Grapevine, Denton county was going to get over 1 billion dollars for roads. So I sponsored a meeting with Denton County Commissioners, the Town Managers and Mayors of Trophy Club, Westlake and Roanoke. At this meeting we requested the 28 million needed to construct the interchange. Of course it took years to get the project going. The Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization made a decision to spend funds on Hwy 114 west of I35W, so the bottle neck has been moved further West. The short area of Hwy 114 through Westlake and Trophy Club need to be widened so there are 3 lanes that can exit to Hwy 170. It is my understanding that this option is being considered and the hope is that this will be completed within 1 year.

It is important to continue to push TxDot and Denton County and solicit the help from Westlake and Roanoke.

Question 6

[Craig Brandon](#)

Hello Mayor White and Nick, and thank you for taking our questions again. Campaigns these days are completely different than they were 10, even 5 years ago. We live in a world of the 24hour news cycle, and even the 1 hour news cycle, where information gets repeated and skewed very quickly. This makes for a very “robust” and I’m sure frustrating job for those who hold public office, as it does voters. My question is, how do you think the city can improve in the way it uses social media, especially around election time? Do you feel sitting council members, board members, and employees could benefit from social media training and even restrictions on how they conduct themselves on social media.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Craig, learning how and when to use social media and stay within the laws for elected officials is difficult and even the interpretation of the State Attorney General as related to these tools is changing as these tools become more prevalent. Using technology to keep citizens is needed. Adding live streaming of meeting might help. Holding electronic meetings for the discussion of key issues might also be helpful. It might be helpful for the town to host some training sessions for citizens to help them better understand how to use the tools.



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) Whew, people all over wish they had the answer to that. We actually do attend some training at TML (Texas Municipal League) for what it is appropriate to say and not say. And their recommendation is usually to avoid social media completely. I tried doing that for a while, but then people think you don’t care! It can be so frustrating because people often post something that may be incorrect or misunderstood and before anyone can get to correcting it, it has morphed and created much discussion! The immediacy of social media is also a problem. We all have other things to do in our lives, as mayor or with family members or at jobs, etc. It is impossible to watch it at all times. One thing

we do have a restriction on is that we should not be posting on anything that we will be voting on in an upcoming meeting. That is really a violation of TOMA. If we have already voted, it is more acceptable. I personally try to stick to only facts, and refrain from offering opinion since that can be construed many ways. One thing I would like to see is people use our Town facebook page when they have issues with the town. Much more likely to get a quick response. Even better to email directly.

Question 7

[Papillon Seal](#)

As the need for open positions present themselves due to performance or growth, what traits will you look for or avoid in people you appoint to leadership, staff and committee positions, and why? Thank you in advance for your willingness to field all voter questions!



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) First of all, it is important to note that Council only has input in the position of Town Manager, Town Secretary and Attorney. All others are hired by the Town Manager, according to our charter. That being said, the traits I always look for in selecting leadership are integrity, willingness to be open, ability to negotiate, knowledge in the area, loyalty. In committee positions, most are chosen by the committees themselves although the Council approves them. There I would look for someone who is knowledgeable in the area, having some solid background and a willingness to step up and to be open minded to consider all aspects of an issue. In any case I will avoid someone who does not appear to be willing to learn or be open to new ideas. I am very concerned as well about people being team players. Everything we do is a matter of teamwork and we have a terrific team in place at this time.



[C Nick Sanders](#) The selection of Town Employees is the responsibility of the Town Manager with the input of council for the Town Secretary, Town Attorney and Town Manager. There are online Assessment tools that can be used for positions that help in understanding how applicants will respond to issues and what work habits they may follow. Use of these tools should be considered for Employees. As related to appointments to boards, commissions and committees it is much harder to evaluate a volunteer. I think more feed back to the volunteers is needed to help them understand their roll. There are in fact training options for Volunteers through various organizations including North Texas Commission and TML. Use of these resources should be encouraged.

Question 8

[Peggy Sweeney](#)

Since you have both now had the opportunity to serve as MUD board directors and mayor, what is your position concerning the town's absorbing the MUD? Since Solana/Westlake have made it clear that they want out, is it in our best interest to negotiate a buyout, in spite of their low-ball starting buyout price?



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) I understand that both the MUD CAC and the Town Blue Ribbon Panel did a great deal of work and identified that it is financially advantageous to keep things as they are. However, I believe Westlake would like to get out of the MUD and I feel it is in our best interest to negotiate a potential buyout, certainly before we incur extensive legal fees, and while we still have leverage. There are many possibilities one could consider, moving just the fire department, removing the MUD but keeping the operation – selling water and/or sewer services to Westlake. I don't know all the specifics, but I believe it would be worth investigating the possibilities. I know there is a concern with the MUD that Westlake is preventing them from moving forward on the sewer plant, but I feel there are alternative solutions there as well that could be employed in the interim – actually I believe that some of what they have recently upgraded has helped a great deal. If we took away that critical pressure we would have time to negotiate or at least try. It may be that we can't come to an agreement, but we should be at the table.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Being open to options is always a good thing, but making sure there is sufficient value in any offer is important. The last offer from Westlake was lacking to say the least. When I was MUD President and while Jim Moss was President, we both went to Westlake and had open communications. At that time there had not been an offer from them and the MUD was not interested in sell off part of its assets without some offer being on the table

The way that the Current Council and Mayor went about placing pressure on the MUD Board was very disappointing to me. They did not come to the board and even try to communicate their wishes prior to making a public statement. It is obvious that there had been communication in closed session about this issue and in fact meetings between Town Managers.

At this point there is litigation between the developer in Westlake and TCEQ so I don't want to comment more at this time.

Question 9

[Jeanne Ferullo Buck](#)

Really appreciate your time tonight and the tremendous service you both provide to Trophy Club. Both of you have served as MUD Directors and as Mayor of our town. I think that makes you both uniquely qualified to answer my question! What is your view on MUD dissolution, especially after reading the BRP and MUD CAC reports? Considering the imminent commercial and residential development of Solana that will yield the MUD millions in tax revenue over the balance of the MUD agreement, what do TC MUD customers (and coincidentally, your entire electorate) stand to gain or lose if the MUD is dissolved and how will you partner with the town of Westlake and the TC MUD to protect the interests if your electorate during this time of uncertainty ?

[Jeanne Ferullo Buck](#) I apologize if this seems repetitive. My screen didn't refresh before I hit "post!" I'm on a mobile device. But I think my last question is slightly different than Peggy's



[C Nick Sanders](#) Thanks Jeanne. I think it is clear what the BRP and CAC offered as their recommendations. And from what I have received from citizens it is also clear that the majority of citizens who contacted me are not interested in dissolution at this time. The financial benefit for the MUD serving Solana is helpful to all citizens in Trophy Club whether you live in the MUD or PID. It helps pay for our Fire Services and provides revenue toward operations. I look at the value much as I look at things in my business. Solana is an asset and should be protected while it makes since. The MUD has tried to keep expenses low and therefore provide value to our citizens as they use water and other service of the MUD. Solana pays less for water and waste water when they use our services as opposed to using Westlake. It is a Win-Win relationship.

If I am elected Mayor, I will do my best to lead this council in a director to focus their efforts on issues that are of interest to a majority of citizens. We need to find ways to get both organizations to work better together. I think I can provide the leadership to accomplish this.



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) First I would like to say I tremendously appreciate all the time and effort put in by both of the committees. Shows just how committed and willing to be there our residents are!

Secondly, MUD dissolution is not a choice of the Town as long as Solana is part of the MUD. I have concerns that it is not morally right to hold out and expect them to be paying for us! That was appropriate for many years, but we no longer support their fire needs so at least that might be a point of negotiation. The financial losses of totally removing Solana have been spelled out quite clearly, but as I stated previously, I just feel there are other possibilities. From my perspective as Mayor I only want to do that which is best for all of our citizens, thus we completed the negotiation of a 99 year contract for water and sewer service to the PID. We continue to stand ready to participate in any negotiations, but the MUD has made it quite clear they are not interested in working with us. I do become frustrated when I think of the costs of fighting with Westlake, costs that we will all have to bear. Please note that while we suggested a partnership discussion – the MUD has steadfastly refused to discuss it. I am hoping now that we have broken the ice with the 99 year agreement, we will be able to work together more reasonably.

Closing Statements

[Julie Teplitsky Folley](#)

Thank you [Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) and [C Nick Sanders](#) for an awesome night!!!!

Please give us your closing statements:



[C Nick Sanders](#) Thanks to everyone for participating this evening and for Julie providing this opportunity. There are many issues ahead for our Town and I pledge to all citizens that I WILL LISTEN to you and your concerns. Providing leadership for the Council and Staff is something I feel I am qualified to do and in fact if you review the recordings and minutes of the past 2 joint meetings, you can judge for yourself. It is time to work together and continue to provide a quality lifestyle and services to all our residents.



[C Nick Sanders](#) Everyone remember the Elect Nick Sanders BBQ this Sunday.



[Mayor Connie Shaw White](#) Actually, I can answer Reece's question*: I love being Mayor of this very special Town. I love the successes we have had and the challenges. I think it is an incredibly special community and I am proud of all that we have accomplished.

Thank you Julie and Scott and everyone who has participated here. I appreciate the time and effort and thoughtful questions. Please feel free to email me directly if you have any others or need any further explanation.

Please be sure to vote and vote for me if you believe I can lead this Town to the

bright future I see for us. Please check out my website
www.mayorconniewhite.com

[Re-Elect Mayor Connie White](http://www.mayorconniewhite.com)

www.mayorconniewhite.com

Re-Elect Mayor Connie White

* The question that is referred to here was from Reece Bautista, “Mayor White .. do you like your gig?” Due to the targeted nature of the question it was not made a formal part of the forum.