



League of Women Voters
of Plano/Collin County
www.lwvcollin.org

Voters Guide

May 8, 2010, Local Elections Allen City Council & ISD

Early voting – April 26–May 4, 2010

Election day – Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

This Voters Guide is published by the League of Women Voters of Plano/Collin County to help citizens prepare to cast an informed vote. The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan organization, encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

This guide includes contested races in which two or more candidates are running. All candidates for the respective offices were invited to participate. If a candidate did not respond by the deadline, “No response from the candidate” is printed. Responses were limited to 100 words and truncated with /// after the 100th word. The candidates appear in alphabetical order.

Candidates for Allen City Council, Place 4

3 year term, elected at large.

Ron Alexander

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972-951-6609

1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

Degree in Political Science. Former Precinct Chairman of Pct. 40 of Collin County. Election Judge since 2000. City of Allen Parks and Recreation Board Member. Practical experience; working with neighboring cities’ council and advisory boards on business related issues. Serving in positions of President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer of Business Networking International.

2. How should the city weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

City Manager, Vargas and staff have done and are doing an incredible job optimizing the city’s financial resources to show fiscal responsibility to it’s citizens. Therefore, I do not find it necessary to reduce services or personnel.

3. How can the city meet the needs of its senior citizens for transportation, health and other services?

Revitalizing downtown to be more senior citizen friendly with for instance incorporating a playhouse theater, delis, coffee shops, authentic soda fountain, drug store, etc. Utilizing more volunteer groups; i.e. churches, civic organizations to provide transportation to medical appointments and shopping. Expanding exercise

programs and facilities within our parks and recreation system and making it easier for our seniors to access these facilities.

4. How can the city facilitate the availability of affordable housing for low-income families, especially as many lose their homes during the financial downturn?

I personally do not feel that it is the city's responsibility to supply affordable housing for low-income families.

5. What are the most important transportation problems in this city and how would you solve them?

I think the City of Allen has done a great job at planning and providing streets and traffic systems to facilitate the flow of traffic throughout the city now, and in the future when congestion from build out reaches its maximum.

In my opinion, paying tolls to commute to and from our city should be addressed on a city, county and state level.

6. What are the most important issues you think will come before the City Council in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

The possible incorporation of DART in the City of Allen: One reason I feel we should oppose this issue is the excess taxation on the citizens of Allen at the price of \$70 Million Dollars per mile, costing Allen taxpayers **over** \$500 Million Dollars to implement. This system will also allow criminals of any type of more easily enter our city and prowl our streets, thus increasing our crime rate and threaten our citizens' well being.

The aging social services of the city's water distribution and sewer systems need to be upgraded before the excessive need for repairs become necessary.

Robin Sedlacek (Incumbent)

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(972) 727-9591

1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

I have been an active volunteer in Allen for the past twenty years. My leadership and volunteer experiences are varied, and range from being on my church leadership, past president and treasurer of the Allen Sports Association, chairing City bond election programs, serving on the Allen Community Development Corporation, and serving on Allen Planning and Zoning Commission.

These experiences helped prepare me for service as a Councilmember, because I got to know Allen in many aspects. By profession I am a CPA, I bring a deep financial background to assist in our City budget and planning process.

2. How should the city weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

Every budget cycle, regardless of current economics, should evaluate services, review staff utilization and effectiveness and plan for current and future capital projects. ***Allen councils, & boards that support them, have been very effective in financial planning and for the 17th consecutive year, have lowered the tax rate.*** Public safety of our citizens should not be comprised to save a buck. Where cities are financially viable and have planned well for capital projects, an economic downturn may provide opportunities to save on project construction costs as well as take advantage of lower bond interest.

3. How can the city meet the needs of its senior citizens for transportation, health and other services?

Many of these programs are not financially feasible to execute at a city level, however, there are state and county programs that we can help to facilitate. We have an active Senior Citizen Center. Teaming with county programs (vaccination days, health clinic, etc) from that site and taking advantage of existing transportation we have in place seems the most viable solution. Identifying elderly as a vulnerable population in emergency plans will better equip us when situations arise. Ex. During power outages, contact with this population may mitigate heat related illness.

4. How can the city facilitate the availability of affordable housing for low-income families, especially as many lose their homes during the financial downturn?

Allen participates in the CDBG program which offers home buyer and home repair assistance to qualifying individuals. In addition, we provide funds to ACO to help residents with a variety of assistance needs. We have identified underserved neighborhoods which often have more affordable housing options. Investing in the sustainability of these neighborhoods will promote homeownership, as well as keep these areas desirable to families.

5. What are the most important transportation problems in this city and how would you solve them?

With the success of our retail/restaurant growth, we are finding that low-cost workers are hard to find in Allen. Working with NCTCOG, we are trying to secure local funding for a shuttle that would route from Parker Rd. DART through our retail/restaurant hubs and back. This would be a user, possibly partner, subsidized program, open to all. Completion of 121/75 corridor will allow our residents options to travel with more ease within our region. I support a regional mass transit system, but this will require support from Austin for local funding options.

6. What are the most important issues you think will come before the City Council in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

Fiscally sound budgets: City leadership must be prudent with all planning and yet not be afraid to take calculated risks where we have opportunities to better our community.

Convention & Tourism: We have made significant investments in development that depend on tourism to support. I recognize programming at Allen Event Center will be critical to maintaining viability of retail, restaurants & hotels and am working with staff on the most effective marketing of Allen as a destination hub.

Business Retention & Recruitment: Businesses will be looking for recovery options as capital frees up. We will remain proactive and aggressive.

Candidates for Allen City Council, Place 6

3 year term, elected at large.

Kevin Livesey

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972-678-0959

1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

I have been a manager in the telecommunications and information technologies industries for my entire career. I am also a concerned citizen and family man who cares about my community and want to serve by helping to make sure that we maintain the high standard of living for all who call Allen home.

2. How should the city weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

Physical responsibility and delayed construction. We need to be smart with the money we have and not ask for more from the citizens financially. We can encourage more carefully planned privately funded growth in our area in order to facilitate more jobs and ensure that more businesses and people are drawn to strengthen the economy of Allen.

3. How can the city meet the needs of its senior citizens for transportation, health and other services?

I would like to explore bringing in some mass transit however I believe that it needs to be self sustaining financially. A private company may be best suited to fill this need. As for health services, I feel that we have excellent medical facilities in place now and currently under construction to meet the existing need.

4. How can the city facilitate the availability of affordable housing for low-income families, especially as many lose their homes during the financial downturn?

I feel that the city can allocate land for affordable housing at reduced costs along with tax incentives and work with various charitable organizations and churches such as Habitat for Humanity to fulfill these needs. People in Allen are generous, caring, giving people so if there is a need we will band together to fill that need.

5. What are the most important transportation problems in this city and how would you solve them?

I believe that the worst transportation issue in the City of Allen is highway 75 running through town. I would work with local and state agencies to work on a plan to widen

the highway through Allen in order to relieve the massive amount of traffic during rush hours. This would also help to alleviate traffic on Greenville Ave as well as other streets going north and south through the city.

6. What are the most important issues you think will come before the City Council in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

I believe that the most important issue that will come up in the next 3 years will be planning for the build out of Allen. I will work with the rest of the council to ensure that the city is positioned so that we remain a strong and viable community and continue to flourish after growth has peaked.

Jeff McGregor (Incumbent)

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214.729.7913

1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

I served on the sign board in 1995 and then on Planning and Zoning from 1996 until 2002. My real estate background prepared me for the commercial and residential development planning. Since 2002, my service on the city council has given me insight on the functions of city government.

2. How should the city weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

The City of Allen has limited growth all budgets and has eliminated unnecessary travel expense. Our current budget projections have conservative revenue growth. In relation to other cities, Allen has been successful in maintaining stable sales tax revenue and assessed valuations. Allen will be able to maintain the same level of service as in the past and do not anticipate any fee increase. Construction cost are at their lowest in several years and we should take advantage of the current economic conditions.

3. How can the city meet the needs of its senior citizens for transportation, health and other services?

Creating housing for our older population that is specific for their needs is an objective of the city. We encourage developers to provide low maintenance, high quality housing that is in proximity to medical facilities. We have one development that is in process. Our parks department provides transportation to the Senior Center and has a range of programming.

4. How can the city facilitate the availability of affordable housing for low-income families, especially as many lose their homes during the financial downturn?

Applications for grants from the government is the best way to provide assistance to low income families. The city has a successful program (Community Block Grant) in place and has provided several hundred thousand dollars in assistance. Home improvement, home buyer assistance and sidewalk repair are just a few examples.

5. What are the most important transportation problems in this city and how would you solve them?

Funding of transportation will be the key for mass transit. The state cannot decide how or when to fund regional transportation. The City of Allen has spent the one cent tax that would be sent to DART on our parks development and community development. I believe that we have done a better job with our expenditures than DART. Once the funding solution is determined, then the options of rail should be discussed.

6. What are the most important issues you think will come before the City Council in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

Fiscal responsibility and the SH 121 development around the Arts of Collin County will be key issues in the next 3 years.

Candidates for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4

3 year term, elected at large

Lois Lindsey (Incumbent)

Unopposed

Candidates for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5

3 year term, elected at large

Gary Stocker (Incumbent)

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469-286-8855

1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

I have six years experience as trustee. I have met or exceeded the state mandated annual continuing education requirements that each trustee must meet.

2. How should the school district weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

The state funding system limits the district to a set cap on revenue per student; Allen has been efficiently using our limited resources for years. Classroom instruction will not be touched. Reducing non-classroom expenses has been a focus of Allen ISD for years and we continue to be very aware of our limited resources.

Delaying construction will only increase project costs causing an increased cost to taxpayers. Bidding for new construction projects is extremely competitive in the current economy and we believe now is a great time to build.

3. What is the best way to reward good teachers? Do you think that the state's merit pay plan for teachers with matching local fund requirements is an effective use of the school district's funds?

Great teachers cannot be compensated enough, unfortunately school districts don't have unlimited resources. Allen has continuously provided competitive teacher compensation and will continue to do so in the future.

Classroom teachers traditionally dislike merit pay because it puts teacher against teacher. AISD is using professional learning communities (PLC) to help teachers continue to grow professionally and develop better instructional lessons to engage students.

4. How should this district prepare students for success whether they are college-bound or not?

Allen is building a Career and Technology Center to help prepare students for post high-school success. Students will be able to choose career pathways that will help them gain knowledge and skills that will serve them whether they are college bound or immediately entering the workforce.

Today's student must be able to apply what they have learned to practical, real-world experiences.

5. What should the school district do to reduce the dropout rate?

Allen ISD is aggressively working to maintain their historically low percentage of dropouts. Early identification of potential dropouts is one of the best ways to reduce and eliminate this challenge.

6. What should the school district do to address the problem of obesity in children?

Allen currently follows State and Federal guidelines on student nutrition and physical activity. Nutrition education, physical activity and replacing bad eating habits with good habits are the key to reducing obesity. Obesity is ultimately the student and parent's responsibility; school districts should not be punished for the obesity of their students.

7. What are the most important issues you think will come before the school district in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

The problematic school finance system must be acknowledged by voters and the Texas Legislature.

The current formulas do not allow revenue from increased property values to flow into the maintenance and operation budget of Allen ISD. The extra revenue only reduces the state's burden and does not benefit Allen.

Our state senators and representatives have already indicated districts should not expect financial relief during the 2011 legislative session.

Any responsible discussion of property tax reduction must include a comprehensive discussion of school funding. Additionally there must be a mechanism available for communities to provide additional enrichment based on local expectations.

Paul Sundar-Singh

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1. Please describe the training and experience that qualify you for this office.

I come from a family of teachers, school administrators and I myself have taught mathematics. I know what it's like to be an educator. I was member of the Project Kids 2008 committee which gave me insight into how the Allen ISD functions. Projects Kids was a citizen advisory committee formed to study facility needs and to make recommendations on short range and long range capital project issues for Allen ISD.

2. How should the school district weather the current financial downturn: reduced services or personnel, increased fees, delayed construction, other measures?

Each measure needs to be closely examined, with results communicated to residents, feedback invited, and decisions made on behalf of the community. We must tap into the community for resources. The board has not made the most of the utilizing the resource opportunities available in the community. I believe that more businesses and community leaders can be motivated to take an active role in fundraising/donations and to provide these much needed resources. The goal being the Allen Independent School District delivering exemplary education at all levels in the most cost-effective methods possible.

3. What is the best way to reward good teachers? Do you think that the state's merit pay plan for teachers with matching local fund requirements is an effective use of the school district's funds?

The basic concept of merit pay based on student performance seems to be a good one on the surface. The previous Texas merit bonus program had many flaws with little positive impact. The new program known as DATE requires district contributions and is voluntary. Because each district faces unique education challenges that a broad State program can encompass, it is may be best to currently address compensation issues within the Allen Independent School District. Paying our teachers a good base salary is an excellent foundation to attract and retain the best educators.

4. How should this district prepare students for success whether they are college-bound or not?

The district can best prepare our students for successful careers by offering diverse classes for vocations not requiring a college degree, as well as college preparation and Advanced Placement courses for those students heading off to college. We also need to give adequate attention to students trending towards not achieving their high school diploma to ensure they meet this essential milestone.

5. What should the school district do to reduce the dropout rate?

Currently we do not have a significant dropout problem in our school district. That being said, I still want to ensure that there is absolutely a zero dropout rate. We need to improve our framework for characterizing at risk children and how we intercede with them early to empower them to achieve their high school diplomas. There is a variety of proven methods for improving these rates that we can explore and tailor to our district's unique needs.

6. What should the school district do to address the problem of obesity in children?

Educate children about where their food comes from, which foods are healthy and how to make good choices from primary school through graduation. Depending on campus space, school gardens are excellent means of giving children hands-on experience in where food comes from and how to grow it themselves, even expanding the concept to teach a few recipes to prepare healthy meals and snacks themselves in age-appropriate lessons. We need to continue to improve on cafeteria offerings of fresh and healthy meals and snacks. We can ensure that children are educated about the consequences of their food choices throughout their education.

7. What are the most important issues you think will come before the school district in the next three years? What are your views on these issues?

The growth in the Allen school district does not match the long and short term plans to address that growth. There is a disconnect between the district population growth and the school district's plans. The plans are more reactive than proactive.