

*Hello Everyone,*

Starting today at Town Hall, you can have a say in Cornelius's future. Please vote! Historically, only 10% of registered voters bother to vote during these off-year, municipal elections, but yet these local issues are critical to our quality of life.

Serving on the Town Board is just that, a service. I'm asking for your vote for one reason only - I love our town and want to contribute to sustaining our quality of life. I've always wanted Cornelius to be a landmark, truly exceptional place to live, with the highest quality of life available in this country, bar none. When I served in the US Army many years ago, I made \$17K per year and shared an apartment with another Lieutenant just off base in Germany, working 6am to 7pm most days and a lot of weekends. I loved serving my country, and I feel the same about our town now.

We have A LOT of great things going on in Cornelius - major new road projects underway over the next 6-8 years, awesome Greenways, the new Rec Center, new medical services and high quality jobs with Atrium Health's new hospital complex, the Cain Center for the Arts, Robbins Park expansion (new tennis courts finally), a new OMB Biergarten attraction, to name several. And for the two decades I've lived here, we've had the finest police and fire departments any town could possibly hope for (more on that to come).

Nonetheless, many citizens share my view that **we need moderation and balance in managing our growth**. It's not just the 1,422 (Junker 195, Greenway Gartens/Caroline 808, Sefton Park 344, Venue 75) apartments approved by current commissioners in the last couple months or the expansion of areas allowing 6 story buildings, signaling more large scale, high-density residential to come. It's a strong sense that our current Board is just not listening to the citizens they represent. **We need to slow down on residential and seriously address traffic congestion, school overcrowding, over-stressing our police and fire departments, continue investing in Park & Rec, and also find ways to preserve some open land, natural habitat, and tree canopy.**

Campaign politics can be tough, but I have thick skin, and don't mind mixing it up with residential developers in social media. Yet I'm deeply demoralized and disappointed by any suggestions whatsoever that I do not adequately support our amazing first responder professionals. For two decades, I've pointed out how exceptional these organizations are with year-after-year of incredible performance and operating metrics. Response times and the impact these professionals have on public safety in our community are off the charts. I traveled all the way to Colorado years ago to support our police department as they gained national recognition with CALEA accreditation. I loved attending the Citizens Police Academy two years ago throughout the fall, getting a feel for the day to day work. And, in the final budget meeting of 2019, I argued for FOCUSING substantial compensation increases on first responders specifically rather than just across-the-board for all town employees. That meeting is on tape at [cornelius.org](http://cornelius.org).

So, why do I get criticized on social media? Because I also ask about cost, specifically long-term cost and whether annual increases which are 3-5X greater than population growth are sustainable for decades? I don't want to lose a second of response times for these departments (like any of us, I could have a heart attack tomorrow morning and am counting on our Fire Dept EMS and county Medic at my house ASAP). And I also believe we can keep one eye on performance and reliability while also keeping one eye on the long term cost on behalf of taxpayers. I met with our Fire Chief last week; everyone understands that we are now building a full-time staffing model for Fire which means personnel costs will go from approx \$900 thousand per year now to over \$4 million over the next several years. Obviously, that is way faster than the town is growing, but unavoidable given the structural realities around staffing two stations with full-time employees versus part-time contractors.

My view is that we absolutely **MUST** sustain our national-best performance (e.g. response times), while doing our very best for the taxpayer; that's what I've been saying since year 1 on the Board.

Final thought - yes, I've voted against the four double-digit tax increases we've seen since 2007, because I know we can do better. We're balancing competing objectives, sure, but it all starts with prudence around residential growth. Our Fire Chief will tell you that an incredible amount of demand for Fire Department resources, for example, comes from 55+ residential communities, so while we think these approvals (and I'm included admittedly having voted to expand Bailey's Glen in recent years) won't burden our schools, they have other cost implications that we need to consider. **Managing growth more responsibly turns out to be the key to managing long term budgets.**

Let me know if anyone has questions, or if I can help with anything. As a quick reminder, my background is summarized below:

- Married 26 years with 4 daughters (CMS all years)
- Resident of Cornelius since 2000
- Cornelius Town Commissioner 2005-2019
- Founder, Scale Finance LLC (finance & accounting services for small companies)
- US Army veteran (Airborne & Ranger qualified)
- Princeton University, Civil Engineering; Harvard Business School.

**Dave Gilroy**