



Washington County Mayoral Candidate Survey Responses

The Chamber Board, with input from our Governmental Relations Council, is pleased to present the results of our recent survey. We trust you will rely on these responses as you determine who should represent Washington County as Mayor. Early voting began April 14th and ends April 29th, with Election Day on May 4th. Please vote and exercise this freedom. We thank the following candidates for their willingness to run and to serve.

Candidates for Washington County Mayor: Don Arnold, Dan Eldridge, James W. Reeves

What qualifications do you bring to the office of Mayor that distinguishes you from your opponents?

Arnold: I have served as a member on the Johnson City City Commission as well as Mayor of Johnson City. I have, likewise, served in the Tennessee Senate for four (4) years; Republican Caucus Chairman, served on Local Government, Transportation, Fiscal Review, and Oversight Committees: Degrees: Accounting and Law.

Eldridge: Twenty-five years business management experience. Started a communications infrastructure business in Washington County, grew to 550 employees with a \$125 million budget. Active in community organizations and activities such as Economic Development Roundtable, Economic Summit infrastructure committee, Home Builders Association, ETSU College of Business & Technology Board of Advisors.

Reeves: For over 20 years, I have been a student of government and its inner workings. I am an USAF veteran. My hobby is government and politics. My beliefs are deeply rooted in the United States Constitution and the writings of the founding fathers. I wrote the wheel tax petition, organized...

Why are you running for Washington County Mayor?

Arnold: I am running for Mayor because I think I have the qualifications and the past experiences that will allow me to lead Washington County into the 21st Century.

Eldridge: The opportunity for my teenage children in this community may not be as good as it was for me. We need to ensure Washington County focuses on making the most of its resources and opportunities to encourage diversified economic growth, job creation and the resulting improved standard of living.

Reeves: I'm running for Washington County Mayor for the people, all of the people. Implement a more open County government, increase voter participation and implement 8 year continuous term limits for elected county officials. Give back some of the tax money that the County government took in 2007 and 2008.

What are the top five priorities you will address in your first 90 days?

Arnold: (1) Fiscal control; (2) Meet with community representatives, the Chamber, and Washington County Economic Development Council to explore new industry, creation and retention of jobs; (3) Appoint a long range planning committee to the Commission; (4) Utilize C-TAS for their fiscal policy help in improving all fiscal policies; (5) Explore downsizing the County Commission.

Eldridge: (1) Pursue all opportunities to recruit new employers and promote the expansion of existing employers; (2) Top to bottom review of budget; (3) Review every aspect of County Government, identifying opportunities to save money and more effectively deliver services; (4) Hire a Human Resources Director; (5) Identify common ground opportunities with Johnson City and Jonesborough.

Reeves: (1) Post agendas and Internet streaming of the County commission meetings; (2) Make it clear, cronyism will not be tolerated. Will implement procedures for anonymous complaints from citizens, county workers and the school system employees, and follow-up personally on these complaints; (3) Start and maintain strong relations with Johnson City and Jonesborough by attending their commission and board meetings; (4) Determine the future of the Downtown Center by sitting down with Johnson City, the Johnson City Downtown

Development Authority and other interested parties; (5) Start evaluating the County budget line by line. Cut the fat.

How will you improve city/county/town relationships?

Arnold: I will work to improve city/county/town relationships by open communication. It is my intention to have regular monthly meetings with the leadership of both Johnson City and Jonesborough. I will work toward and encourage initiation and setting up of mutually beneficial programs.

Eldridge: I already have working relationships with 4 of the City Commissioners, the City Manager, the Jonesborough Administrator and Mayor. Building on these relationships, we will work to identify common interests of our constituents, and focus on pursuit of the mutual benefits. I communicate as a consensus builder not an adversary.

Reeves: Attend Johnson City and Jonesborough meetings, especially when there is any County concern being discussed or an item that citizens of the county would like me to address. I will be their servant.

How will you enhance/build the Washington County School and Johnson City School Systems since education is economic and community development?

Arnold: While the County Mayor has no control over the city schools, as Mayor I will do all I can to enhance and secure the growth and development of both city and county schools in the most cost effective manner possible.

Eldridge: I will focus on creating a partnership between the County Commission and School Board. Our commission needs to consider dollars spent on education as an investment and seek to enhance the taxpayers' return. Washington County schools are now realizing significant improvements which as Mayor I will promote and encourage.

Reeves: Attend school board meetings; listen to concerns not only from school officials but also from school employees and the citizens of the county. Some of the best ideas will not be my ideas.

Under what circumstances will you raise property taxes?

Arnold: I have no intentions at this point in time recommending any type of tax increase for Washington County due to the severe economic conditions presently in existence. It would take a truly catastrophic type problem for me to consider any type of tax increase.

Eldridge: I will not support any tax increases. Rather, I will manage Washington County like a business, focused on cost savings, prioritized expenditures, long range planning and economic growth.

Reeves: Significant loss of federal and state money. The current County budget is loaded with fat right now, the plan is to reduce property tax and pay some extra on the debt load.

How do you propose to broaden the tax base?

Arnold: Growth

Eldridge: By encouraging retail expansion, growth in tourism and conventions, residential and commercial development where we have the infrastructure to support it and promoting the entrepreneurial spirit of our community.

Reeves: Growth happens naturally. In other words, the citizens will grow the County as they see fit. I will listen and help where I can.

Will you support the continued funding of the newly formed Washington County Economic Development Council? Why? Tri-Cities TN/VA Regional Economic Development Alliance? Why? Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Economic Development Board? Why?

Arnold: (1) I will support the continued funding of the Washington County Economic Development Council because I think it has tremendous possibilities. I am especially impressed with the partnership that has been formed between the public sector and the private sector. (2) I would be open to consider funding for the Tri-Cities TN/VA Regional Economic Alliance based on its results in recruitment and continued cooperation with our local economic development boards. (3) Yes, I would support the continued funding of the Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Economic Development Board. It is a primary tool for economic development.

Eldridge: I will continue to support each of these economic development efforts. However, I will also encourage strong collaboration between all groups to ensure the taxpayer dollars invested in these efforts result

in the maximum economic development benefit for this community. We must effectively pursue every opportunity without duplicating efforts.

Reeves: Yes, fund them all for now. I will personally, attend meetings of these boards and see how effective they really are. Seems we may have some overlapping agendas.

How will you and the Commission work with the Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Chamber of Commerce?

Arnold: It would be my recommendation to partner with the Chamber of Commerce on any project that would better Johnson City or Jonesborough. I would also encourage the Washington County Commissioners to join and become a part of the Johnson City/Jonesborough/Washington County Chamber of Commerce.

Eldridge: First, I will ensure that we all understand the resources and benefits of The Chamber of Commerce. Also, because the Chamber plays an integral role as advocate for our local businesses, I will encourage the County Commission to engage the Chamber on any issue potentially impacting local business.

Reeves: With open ears.

When your term is in its last quarter in 2014, will Washington County be positioned for growth for the rest of the decade? What will be the indicators?

Arnold: It is my hope that in 2014, the economy in such a state of recovery that Washington County will be positioned for growth for the rest of the decade. Some of the better indicators will be employment statistics, increase in building permits, increase in bank deposits, and consumer confidence.

Eldridge: Yes, long term economic growth must be a top priority. Indicators will be economic development and recruitment efforts built on our education, medical and technology strengths with commitment to work force development. Lower unemployment and increasing median family income above our current rank of 30th in Tennessee will indicate improvement.

Reeves: I believe in the people of this county. Washington County citizens are who truly make this area great. I will lead by example, and I know, we will all grow together.

What are your plans for job creation, retention, and expansion?

Arnold: Increase the County's involvement in the Washington County Economic Development Alliance and the Johnson City/Washington County Economic Development Board. I would also like to explore the possibility of increased enrollment at ETSU and I would work with its leadership to see how this would best be obtained.

Eldridge: Encourage a coordinated effort among all local and regional economic development groups to identify recruitment opportunities in our target industries, support existing businesses through work force development efforts and reduce local governmental obstacles. I'll advocate a regional approach to economic development, realizing that what benefits our neighbors will benefit us.

Reeves: Reduce property taxes by at least \$1million. Listen to business leaders and help where I can. Remove government obstacles for growth, where I can.

In a time when there are more requests for services than there are resources, what is your approach and philosophy for budget management and fiscal responsibility?

Arnold: Live within our means.

Eldridge: My philosophy is manage county government like a business. We must prioritize and control spending through zero based budgeting and eliminate waste through efficient management. A long term plan for capital expenditures must be implemented. New services, if justified, will be funded through resulting savings and economic growth.

Reeves: Prioritize services. Do not overtax the citizens just to replenish the fund balance. A government should only take from its people what it needs to operate and provide services.

What is your position on reducing the size of the Washington County Commission from 25 members?

Arnold: I favor a reduction in the size of the Washington County Commission from 25 members to 9 members. This would reduce costs for the County, as well as increase the efficiency of the Commission itself.

Eldridge: Only the commission itself can reduce the number. I'll support the voters' preference regarding the size of the commission. However, 2014 is the soonest it could happen. Therefore, the next Mayor must work with 25 commissioners. As a consensus builder, I have no concern about being an effective Commission Chairman.

Reeves: 18 or less. I realize, the commissioners actually decide for themselves how many commissioners there will be. I plan to lead them to reduce the size of the commission.

What are the impediments to economic growth in Washington County?

Arnold: The impediments to economic growth in Washington County, besides the economy, are our failure to properly utilize all available resources and realizing the fact that we are now a global economy.

Eldridge: The lack of an effective shared vision and focused and coordinated efforts have been key impediments. We have the resources and assets to realize successful economic growth. The key is focus on our strengths, opportunities and an organized effort, rather than the reasons we haven't been successful in the past.

Reeves: The government at all levels, and the economy.

What is your position on TIF in Johnson City Downtown development?

Arnold: I am generally in favor of the concept but we must assess each project on its merits.

Eldridge: I support TIF as a tool for economic and community revitalization in Johnson City and Jonesborough.

Reeves: I was surprised, as most were, when the reappraisal money from the TIF district was appropriated to the Johnson City Downtown Development Authority. The County will need to keep a close eye on current legislation to make certain the situation does not arise again. Otherwise I have always liked the...

What is your position on the pending Courthouse Revitalization legislation?

Arnold: I am generally in favor of this legislation because it will, in my opinion, benefit not only Jonesborough but Washington County.

Eldridge: The legislation that Jonesborough has proposed and the County Commission has endorsed will bring new jobs and increase tourism to our area. I strongly support Jonesborough's efforts.

Reeves: I heard about the Courthouse Revitalization legislation at a County commission meeting. It is my understanding that this may take some time to implement, however as it was presented, it seemed like a very good idea.