

All Candidates Response Form

Village of Harrison Hot Springs



Instructions

1. Complete the Candidate Information below, then answer all questions, including the Lightning Round. These questions apply to all candidates, whether running for Mayor or Council.
2. Type your answer in the response box under each question. Responses may be given in any order.
3. Each response must be no more than 500 words. Lightning Round answers are YES or NO.
4. Your file MUST be saved in PDF format and titled with your name, for example: Stephanie_Gallamore.pdf
5. Word documents will NOT be converted to PDF for the website. Files that are not PDFs cannot be posted.
6. When finished, in Word use File > Save As (or Export), choose PDF as the file type, and name the file with your name. Return the completed PDF as directed by the event organizers.

Candidate Information

Candidate name:

Fred Talen

Running for:

☒ Mayor ☐ Council

File name to save as:

Fred Talen Chamber Questions

Click in a box and type. Boxes expand as you type.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

For all candidates

Question 1

When a tourism business wants to expand, do you see that as an opportunity for economic development or a risk to preserving Harrison's character? What criteria would you use to decide?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

In all likelihood this is not an 'either-or' question. All expansion of tourism related activities has the potential to affect the quality of life for Harrison Hot Springs residents. Responsible enhancement of tourism related activities should always consider impacts on residents' quality of life and taxes.

Anticipating and minimizing conflicts, such as potentially with visitor parking, while ensuring the burden of supporting tourism does not fall solely on residential tax payers, should always be factors Council considers before making a decision.

It is also true that a healthy business sector, whose municipal tax rate is higher than the residential tax rate, helps to keep residential tax rates low.

Like many decisions before Council, finding the right balance, making sound decisions both in the short and long term is the challenge. Making informed decisions by having as much information as possible, including hearing from residents and businesses, helps Council to make decisions that are in the best interests of the whole Village.

Question 2

What is your approach to transparency and accountability? What information do you think residents are not currently getting from council that they should be receiving?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

Transparency and accountability are fundamental to a democracy. Open Council meetings, where residents can see and hear Council debate and make decisions is important. Holding elected leaders accountable, through questions during Council meetings and elections are also important.

Along with transparency and accountability I would add being accessible. If re-elected I will continue to keep regular office hours and will make myself available every couple of months or so at a local coffee shop, restaurant, or park for informal meetings where residents can speak with me about local issues that are important to them.

The Village's website has a considerable information about, bylaws, policies, events, projects, and Village operations. In addition, Fun Fact Friday, Council Catch-up and the monthly news letter residents can sign up for at www.getintoitharrison.ca all help keep residents informed.

In addition, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) sets out the requirements of governments, including municipal governments, to provide copies of government records when requested. This legislation also sets out what records cannot be provided and also ensures persons privacy is protected when records are provided pursuant to a FOIPPA request.

I am also well aware that some residents do not trust Council to make decisions in the best interests of the Village, and object to Council holding closed meetings. These residents believe that everything Council discusses should be discussed in an open Council meeting. However, in my view, at times, this could compromise the interests of the Village, result in additional costs to the Village, or disclose information publically that should be private. All governments in Canada have the need to meet in a closed setting in order to deal with certain matters.

Provincial legislation governing municipal governments is clear on what matters must, and what matters may be discussed by Council in a closed meeting. This legislation also requires that once the need for confidentiality is no longer present, decisions made in closed meetings must be made public.

Provincial legislation requires that those matters not required or permitted to be discussed in a closed meeting, must be discussed in an open Council meeting.

Question 3

How would you work to strengthen the relationship and communication between the Village of Harrison Hot Springs and the District of Kent, including pursuing a cost-sharing agreement for the regional aquatic centre so Harrison residents can access the same rates and registration

opportunities as District of Kent residents, while also strengthening partnerships with other community organizations?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

To begin, the Village has had, and continues to have, a good relationship with the District of Kent in many areas. We cooperate and partner with the District of Kent, and others, on emergency planning and preparedness.

If re-elected I will reach out to District of Kent and re-engage in discussions regarding Harrison Hot Springs residents' access to the Aquatic Centre. I am confident that a solution can be found that benefits both the District of Kent and Harrison Hot Springs that permits Harrison Hot Springs residents to access the aquatic centre at a reasonable rate.

Question 4

What specific initiatives would you support to attract visitors in the fall, winter, and spring? What are your priorities for improving Harrison's tourism infrastructure?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

I see opportunities, working with other parties, to enhance the visitor experience enjoying the hot springs. The hot springs can be a year round feature that attracts visitors to Harrison Hot Springs.

I believe there are also opportunities to pursue other arts related events that could capitalize on Harrison Hot Springs unique waterfront in the shoulder seasons.

A splash or spray park would be a great feature to add to Harrison Hot Springs.

Question 5

Harrison Hot Springs Elementary is an aging school in a growing community. If elected, do you support the Village actively pursuing the Civic Campus project in partnership with School District 78 to make a new elementary school a reality? What specific actions would you support?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

This question, while on an important subject, is premised on an all or nothing approach to decision making with limited information. While I am in favour of exploring this idea at this time (without making a final decision) of a partnership with the School Board regarding a land exchange that might facilitate the building of a new school, I presently do not have sufficient information to make an informed decision whether I am in favour of "pursuing the Civic Campus project in partnership with the School District 78".

What is clear to me is that the current school is too small for Harrison Hot Springs. A larger school is needed, and the School Board recognizes this. The challenge is to raise the profile of this project with the Province so that funding can be dedicated to this project. Collaborating, finding ways to reduce costs, all help to build a compelling argument for a new school.

Question 6

What are your priorities for emergency management?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

My priorities are the protection of people and the protection of property.

I will continue to advocate for investing in training, equipment, tabletop mock exercises, building and maintaining relationships with emergency response partners, along with providing residents with an up to date emergency preparedness handbook.

Question 7

Harrison is a small, close-knit community. How would you keep personal relationships, business interests, or political disagreements from influencing your decisions as an elected official — and how would you handle it when residents strongly disagree?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

I do not accept the premise of the question in that elected leaders need to be removed and separate from the community they serve. The curbside conversations with neighbours, the chance meetings with other residents throughout the Village and time spent with friends and family all help to inform decisions an elected leader might make.

A conflict of interest, which the question does not speak to, is another matter. Conflicts of interests must be declared, and where a conflict of interest exists that elected leader should recuse themselves from the decision making process regarding the matter where the conflict exists.

Any decision Council makes could result in a resident strongly disagreeing with that decision. Listening to what the concern is and understanding why that resident disagrees is a good place to start, and if the opportunity presents itself, explain the reasons why the decision was made.

Question 8

Can you tell us about your involvement in our community to date — whether through serving on committees, volunteering, or attending council meetings?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

For the last two years I have been Harrison Hot Springs Mayor. I have represented and spoken for the Village of Harrison Hot Springs in many forums, meetings and with the media. I also Chair the Village's Age Friendly Committee.

In addition to these mayoral responsibilities, I am Council's liaison with the Chamber of Commerce and Agassiz Harrison Community Services.

I have volunteered my time ringing bells for the Blue Bucket Campaign raising money for the Agassiz Harrison Community Services food bank.

I am also on the Board of Directors for the Harrison Festival Society.

Question 9

Council operates under specific rules of procedure, including Robert's Rules of Order and the Community Charter. How do you plan to educate yourself on these, and what commitment will you make to being prepared before your first council meeting?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

I have chaired Council meetings for the last two years. Should a point of order be raised, or I am uncertain on specific procedures, Village staff are experts on these matters and I would rely on their advice.

Question 10

What is your top priority for your term in office in Harrison Hot Springs?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

1. Review and understand the factors that informed the decision to locate the Village's waste water treatment plant in its current location and assess whether those factors remain valid. And informed by those factors and that assessment, consider and approve a 5, 10 and 15 year plan for investing in the Village's water, waste water, storm water, water treatment and waste water treatment to maintain and enhance these utility systems to align with future growth while ensuring the overall system remains affordable.
2. Continue to explore and pursue opportunities to enhance the visitor experience in Harrison Hot Springs with particular emphasis on increasing tourism in the shoulder seasons and winter.
3. Develop an arrangement with the District of Kent to see that Harrison Hot Springs residents have access to their Aquatic Centre and Recreational Centre at a reasonable price.

Question 11

What do you believe is Harrison's most urgent infrastructure problem, and what would you do about it?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

To begin, "urgent infrastructure problems", should they exist, should be actively addressed by Village staff. "Urgent infrastructure problems" could lead to, or result in, an emergency if not promptly addressed. While equipment can fail at any time, or an unforeseen event can create an infrastructure problem without notice, I am not aware of any urgent infrastructure problems at this time.

1. While not an 'urgent infrastructure problem' the Village needs to review and understand the factors that informed the decision to locate the Village's waste water treatment plant in its current location and assess whether those factors remain valid. And informed by those factors and that assessment, consider and approve a 5, 10 and 15 year plan for investing in the Village's water, waste water, storm water, water treatment and waste water treatment to maintain and enhance these utility systems to align with future growth while ensuring the overall system remains affordable.

Question 12

What is your position on the Village's water and wastewater infrastructure, and how should council approach the significant capital costs involved?

Your response (maximum 500 words):

Review and understand the factors that informed the decision to locate the Village's waste water treatment plant in its current location and assess whether those factors remain valid. And informed by those factors and that assessment, consider and approve a 5, 10 and 15 year plan for investing in the Village's water, waste water, storm water, water treatment and waste water treatment to maintain and enhance these utility systems to align with future growth while ensuring the overall system remains affordable.

LIGHTNING ROUND (YES / NO)

All candidates: check YES or NO for each question

Lightning Question 1

Do you support the Village continuing to pursue the Civic Campus project and a land exchange with School District 78 for a new elementary school?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 2

Would you support the Village pursuing a cost-sharing agreement with the District of Kent so Harrison residents pay the same fees at regional recreation facilities?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 3

Will you commit to holding council wages and expenses at 2026 levels for the next four years?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 4

Do you support stronger protection of Harrison's natural areas even if it limits some future development opportunities?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 5

Have you volunteered with a local organization in the last three years?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 6

Do you believe Harrison should actively encourage expansion of tourism businesses and new tourism investment over the next four years?

☐ YES

☐ NO

Lightning Question 7

Do you commit to respectful conduct to fellow council + staff even when you disagree?

☐ YES

☐ NO