

# Eight Candidates in Village Election Answer Questionnaire

## Guide for Voters Monday In Selection of President And 3 Commissioners

**THE QUESTIONS**

On this page candidates for village president and the Commission express their views on various public questions of current interest, through the medium of a list of questions submitted to them last week by The Eccentric. The questions were the same for each candidate, and were as follows:

1. How long have you been a resident of Birmingham?
2. What public offices have you previously held, and for how long?
3. What are your views regarding the present financial condition of the village?
4. Do you believe that operating expenses for 1932 should be and can be reduced to a greater degree than provided in the 1932 budget as tentatively adopted in January? If so, what further reductions would you propose?
5. Do you believe there is ever an occasion for conducting the business of the Commission in closed "committee" sessions, or do you feel it can all be transacted in public meetings, as the charter provides? What types of business do you believe are not matters for public discussion, and why?
6. If you have any further remarks, please add them below your other answers.

**THE ANSWERS**

**HARRY ALLEN**

1. Altogether about 35 years.
2. I have been a member of the Village Commission for three years.
3. My opinion is of little consequence. Some of the salient facts which reflect this condition are the following: There is owing to the village for delinquent taxes and assessments covering the years 1926 to 1931, both inclusive, in round figures, the sum of \$675,000 without interest or penalties. Because of the character of the village these taxes and assessments are eventually to be paid in full or with negligible loss. The percentage of delinquencies are altogether too high for this or any other village. It results in making the cash situation of the village exceedingly difficult. It will have to be met by diligent efforts to collect, by refunding part of the village bond obligations, by reduction of expense, and by borrowing in anticipation of tax collections. All but the last have been and are being done.
4. The village has had on Jan. 1 a non-cash surplus of \$68,300, which has been somewhat increased since the first of the year by operating economies. In 1931 the budget allowed for operating expenses in operation that expense was actually \$23,000 less than the budget figure, a reduction of \$79,174.00, or \$18 per cent below the 1931 amount, and a reduction of \$56,000 below what was actually spent last year for that purpose. The

through tax income next summer they will have to borrow further funds on April 1 and May 1 to pay even the interest on bonds maturing at that time and the bonds will either have to be refunded or have to go in default.

4. Yes, the budget must be cut to meet the cash income of the village. We have no right in these times, to spend, as a village, more than we get, just as the individual has no right to spend more than he earns.

One of the greatest savings to Birmingham taxpayers would be the immediate incorporation of Birmingham as a city; such a change would save the taxpayers at least \$60,000 a year. The initiating of such a plan in Bloomfield Hills makes our need for city incorporation all the more necessary.

5. Only on rare occasions there are subjects best discussed by the Commission in executive session, subjects which, by publicity, might increase the cost of the project to the village; subjects involving the character or reputation of an individual, questions of public health and such matters best be kept, at times, from public discussion.

6. It seems to me that the greatest problem facing Birmingham (or any other community) is that of taxes. Taxes are levied against property to defray the cost of government, and the only way to lower taxes is to reduce the cost of government. Sensing the tax delinquency problem several years ago, on Jan. 1, 1931, I addressed the following letter to the Commission: I am including it here as a means of reminding our citizens that civic problems of financial nature can be seen in advance and can be avoided in part if proper plans are prepared and executed. Here is the letter, in part:

"To the Commission, Village of Birmingham.

"One cannot but be alarmed at the constantly increasing cost in the operating expenses of the village and wonder just where and when the extensive increases are to stop. Last year I asked the Commission to hold the tax rate to \$12 per thousand, making the necessary cuts in the budget, but the cuts were not made, the rate was raised to \$13 and our expenditures in 1929 exceeded the very liberal budget appropriation by over \$8,000. A study will indicate an increasing expense out of proportion to the increasing assessed valuation. We must find a more economical method of transacting the business of the village.

With an increase of over \$100,000 in operating expenses in 1927 and 1928, with another increase of \$35,000 in 1929 over 1928, and facing the possibility of an increase this year of perhaps \$70,000, it is time to call a halt."



Dr. Fred L. Tucker

to meet the taxes that are paid in:

4. I believe further cuts can be made in operating expenses but would have to study them to see in which departments they can be made without impairing efficiency.
5. There are no matters that could not be discussed in public as it is the people's business that the Commission is transacting.

**E. W. OSBORNE**

1. Ten years.
2. None.
- 3 and 4. The village revenues and expenses have to be balanced.

1932. Village Planning Commission, July, 1928 to April 1, 1932; Village Charter Revision Committee, 1926; U. S. Army, 1917 to 1919.

3. Village finances: As in all other communities, we have abnormal tax delinquencies which create unusual conditions. These are being met by:

- (1) Paring operating expenses to the bone.
- (2) Necessary reduction of fixed capital charges (all interest payments are being promptly met).
- (3) Listing all practical means of securing payment of taxes and the collection of other municipal revenues.
- (4) Short-term loans in anticipation of tax collections.

This problem has been given very constant and careful attention by the Commission and our village officials. As a result of drastic economies and in spite of delinquent tax payments I believe there can be a decrease in our summer tax rate as well as a considerable reduction in the total assessed valuation for village taxes without impairing our credit. Our delinquent tax collections are such that as general conditions continue to improve and the surplus created by uncollected delinquent taxes is made available for public improvements, further substantial reductions in village taxes can be made, provided present financial policies and operating economies are continued.

I am in favor of continuing these policies and economies for this purpose. If this is done I consider that our financial condition will continue to be very satisfactory and we certainly are in much more favorable circumstances than municipalities around us. Village taxes should not be confused with which, in many cases, have been increased as a result of the recent activities of the State Tax Commission in this vicinity.

4. Operating expense reduction.
5. Operating expenses, of course, can be reduced to any degree desired by continuing the

process of eliminating public service. The present budget represents a reduction of approximately 35 per cent (\$103,786.00) in operating expenses as compared with 1930. In order to make this reduction 17 regular employees have been dropped. The established scale of salary increases for firemen and police officers has been suspended for the past two years. The manager's salary has been cut 15 per cent from \$5000 to \$4250, and other salaries and wages have been reduced to average approximately 10 per cent. Various services have been either eliminated entirely or greatly reduced. There are several fixed items of operating expense incurred in previous years, (in addition to bonded indebtedness) which are beyond our control.

I think all of the present Commission would like to save expense by cutting out more of the excessive lighting of Woodward avenue. We have been hampered, however, by the contract between the village and the Edison Company.

(Turn to Page 4, this section)



Charles E. Lewis

It does not appear that we can afford anything except necessities now or in the near future.

5. I can see that a discussion of minor details might well be held in private. The completion of any business should be public and open.

**WALTER L. CONNELLY**

- 1—Twelve years.
- 2—Board of Review, village of Birmingham, two years; Board of Review, Troy Township, one year; commissioner, village of Birmingham, two years.
- 3—I do not view the present financial condition of the village as alarming. There is money avail-



E. W. Osborne

able to carry through March. A loan will have to be negotiated in April for interest and bond retirement. These are general obligations. It will not be necessary to borrow as much this year as the charter contemplates. Bonds maturing this year probably will have to be refunded which is sound practice and is universally done by other municipalities.

4—I believe that the operating expenses for 1932 as tentatively adopted in January can be and will be reduced. This is a process which goes on continuously. It may be necessary to eliminate some services the village is now rendering. This can be done and the operating expense further reduced.

5—The business of the Commission is never conducted in closed "committee" sessions. The closed committee sessions are held solely for the purpose of studying the problems which are presented to the Commission. I do not know any type of business which are not matters for public discussion.

6—I believe the charter should be changed so as to make our fiscal year for public discussion period start at the same time.

**T. J. SMITH**

1. Forty-four years.
2. Village Commissioner four years; village president one year.
3. We must cut our expenses

It does not appear that we can afford anything except necessities now or in the near future.

5. I can see that a discussion of minor details might well be held in private. The completion of any business should be public and open.

**CHARLES E. LEWIS**

1. I have been a resident and property owner in Birmingham for nine years.
2. Public offices held: Birmingham Village Commission, 1930 to



Walter L. Connelly

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40c SQUIBB DENTAL CREAM  
59c MI-31 ANTISEPTIC, 1 pt.  
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JERGEN'S SOAP, 3c per cake

10c FORT ORANGE TOILET PAPER  
Tinted or White  
15 Rolls \$1

LAVORIS, 20 oz. Bottle  
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Both \$1 for

TARGET TOBACCO and CIGARETTE ROLLER  
Both \$39c

CIGARS  
Havana Ribbon, Williams Bean, R. G. Dunn Babies, El Toro, Broadway  
25 \$1 for

25c Powder Puff FREE  
With each \$1 box Face Powder

2 lbs. CASCADE LINEN STATIONERY  
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All \$1 for

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Sparkling Lime or Sparkling Orange, or Soda  
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comparable figure for 1930 is \$269,413, or substantially \$100,000 more than the 1932 allowance. The village pay-rolls have been reduced \$41,827 or 29.5 per cent below the amount contained in the 1931 budget, which reduction has been effected by the elimination of employees and a reduction in the rate of compensation paid.

The village has 11 fewer employees than it had at the beginning of 1931, and 17 fewer than were employed by the village in 1930.

It should be remembered that even in the operating expense of the village there are certain items which are fixed and are not subject to change by the Commission, such as the half mill tax required to be raised for the library. These items aggregate \$56,000.

In addition to the cost of operating, the village must meet this year for principal and interest on bonds maturing in 1932 have been, the sum of \$116,142. These two items, namely, operating costs and bond and interest requirements, plus whatever amount is fixed for contingencies, less interest on bonds, taxes, fines, rents, etcetera, make up the amount of the budget.

57 per cent of the taxes levied for 1931 have been paid, and only 25 per cent of the special assessments maturing in 1932 have been collected, and except for the almost certain continuance of tax delinquencies the tax rate for 1932 could be lowered from last year's rate of \$12.50 per \$1000 to \$11.25 per \$1000, and to provide a sum of \$5000 to meet contingencies. In any event it seems that an village in this class can provide a sum of \$5000 to meet contingencies. In any event it seems that an village in this class can provide a sum of \$5000 to meet contingencies. In any event it seems that an village in this class can provide a sum of \$5000 to meet contingencies.

4. The budget is an estimate only of maximum expenses and minimum receipts. This year's budget is based on two years; village president, two terms; Village Commission, two years.

5. It is very evident in my mind that the village did obligate itself in 1930 to the extent of \$300,000 (\$50,000).

**J. HARRY MCBRIDE**

1. Seventeen years.
2. Board of Review, two years; village president, two terms; Village Commission, two years.
3. It is very evident in my mind that the village did obligate itself in 1930 to the extent of \$300,000 (\$50,000).

Further capital expenditures are out of the question until these obligations are reduced to an amount, the payment of which does not involve ruinous taxation. Debts of this class are incurred in times of high prices and active property, but they have to be paid sometimes in periods of depression and of low paying ability.

Further reductions in personnel and in services rendered by the village can still be made. Much further reduction, however, will result in impairing the standard of the essential services now rendered, such as police and fire protection, and/or in impairing the efficiency of an organization built carefully over a period of years and to whose sagacious planning much of the saving heretofore made in operating costs is due.

**HAROLD T. ELLERBY**

1. Eight years.
2. President of the village three years.
3. The village is facing the position of the bank whose assets are frozen and is required to close its doors. The frozen assets of the

of which was retired in 1931) to pay running expenses and obligations incurred, which should have been paid for out of receipts from taxes, it is very evident in my mind that we are in a very precarious financial condition and it is imperative that something drastic will necessarily have to be done if we are going to keep the running expenses of our village government within its income. By that I mean, within the tentative amount of taxes which are reasonably sure will be collected.

5. I believe all sessions of the Commission should be public.

6. The voters themselves must determine whether my past record in public service qualifies me for the office. All I desire is a fair trial. It is that, if I am elected, I will do all in my power to balance the budget and to reduce, so far as appears to be the greatest present need.

**DR. FRED L. TUCKER**

- 1—Eight years.
- 2—Commissioner, village of Birmingham, two years.
- 3—I feel that the financial condition of the village is not alarming at this time. Some refunding of bonds will be necessary this year which appears to be sound practice. The village will have to borrow some money in April for interest and operating expenses.

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