

# Stop the Outer Loop Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name

Reid Haire

## The Outer Loop has been tabled for now. What is your stance on the Outer Loop proposal and any future bypass that may be proposed?

I opposed the Outer Loop initiative from the start and I wrote the Director of Transportation in Madisonville in mid 2021 to convey my opposition. The City and the County spent over \$100 million to attract more and more people downtown. That investment resulted in more than \$200 million private dollars into the downtown revitalization. Why would we then invest billions of taxpayer dollars to entice people to bypass our community? Our focus should not be in pursuing an Outer Loop, but in lobbying Frankfort to improve and widen the main arteries into and out of our city- namely Highways 54, 56, 81, 231, and 431.

## What is your stance on Highway 56 improvements and what do you propose?

The State of Kentucky, Department of Transportation has responsibility for Highway 56, as well as all other state roads in the County. Fiscal Court does not. The Court can work with the state to focus its attention on certain highways. It can lobby state legislators to include improvements to state highways in Daviess County in its bi-annual budget. If improvements are needed on Highway 56, I would encourage people to contact State Representative Suzanne Miles and Senator Matt Castlen.

## As county lands continue to be developed, what is your stand on future annexations of county lands into the city of Owensboro?

Kentucky law states that if property is contiguous, that is, right up next to city property, the city has the right to annex it into the city if the property owner or more than 50% of the property owners agree to it. My "stand" on it is immaterial. That is the law, unless Frankfort decides to change it. With regard to spot annexations, where the property is not contiguous to city property, I have consistently opposed it and have threatened lawsuits on some occasions to prevent the city from proceeding. Vigilance is needed whenever annexations are proposed to make sure the city is following the law.

## Do you think that Daviess County government should provide or pay for ditch cleaning of major waterways on private property?

The topography of Daviess County is such that heavy and prolonged rains often result in significant flooding problems for Daviess County residents. Most who have lived here for any period of time know this. It affects farmlands, residences, highways, and business operations. Most of the residents of Daviess County, urban and rural alike, have at one time or another been adversely impacted by water ponding and drainage issues. For the general welfare and safety, it is important that our waterways are, with our best efforts possible, kept free of impediments and barriers which prevent water from flowing swiftly to the Green and Ohio Rivers. Now there are what are called Blue-line ditches which are the major creeks in Daviess County and which are regulated by the Corps of Engineers. The Corps has authority over these bodies of waters and any cleaning must have the approval of the Corps. To adequately answer the question, if the flooding and ditch cleaning only impacts one private citizen or just his business operation, then Daviess County government should not be providing the ditch cleaning work. It would not be appropriate. However this is seldom the case. Flooding rarely just affects one property owner. Water does not recognize property lines. It goes where it will. Daviess County government does have a responsibility to insure the protection of life and property. If flooding is an issue, then Daviess County government should attempt to reasonably fix the problem, if economically feasible.

## What are some areas of the current county budget that could be cut to lower taxes?

Local government does more with less than either the Federal or State governments. Sometimes local government has to pay for the unfunded mandates which Frankfort imposes (e.g. State retirement contributions from local governments). County property taxes have remained virtually unchanged in over 20 years. The County occupational tax was imposed to help cover the increased costs of police and fire protection, as well as jail costs for housing prisoners. Candidates will preach cutting taxes but in reality they will find an efficient and conservative operation in County government. Tweaks can be made of course, but not enough to make wholesale tax reductions.

## Do you see our Planning and Zoning process as an impediment to business growth? How could it work better?

This question has been an issue in Daviess County since 1977 when P&Z was adopted in our county. Planning and Zoning does more good than harm. But as with any complex set of regulations, and the Comprehensive Plan is a complex volume, sometimes there are instances where common sense and good judgment are needed and they conflict with the written rules. In those situations the elected officials should stand up for what is right and do their best to make Daviess County business friendly and citizen oriented. Situations arose when I was Judge, that we disagreed with Planning and Zoning's decision on a case. After deliberation, Fiscal Court reversed the decision, in favor of the business interest. I am not reluctant to do so again, if appropriate.

## Serious crime seems to be way up in Daviess County. How will you work toward protecting residents and their properties?

Well, is serious crime "way up in Daviess County"? "Seems to be" is hardly a statement of fact. Is it or isn't it? If it is, then we must work harder with law enforcement and local citizens to identify the challenges and address them. If it is not, then good for Daviess County citizens, and for the visitors who come to our community.

When I was County Judge, additional deputies were hired and funding increases were made to the Sheriff's office for personnel and equipment. Two new fire stations were built- one in Utica and a paid station on Highway 54, which is manned 24/7. Nine new firefighters were hired. Additional sirens were erected in the county to provide a more comprehensive alert system for tornadoes. The 911 system was overhauled and combined with the City of Owensboro to provide for quicker emergency response times. The new jail was built on

what was then Highway 60, to better house the prisoners we had. Additional educational and medical training requirements were instituted for paid firefighters. Public safety is the primary role of government. It will continue to be my highest priority.

**Do you agree with the current occupational tax structure? Do you think current tax rates are fair? If not, how would you work to change it?**

The occupational tax is a regressive tax, meaning it takes a greater percentage of the discretionary monies from those in the middle and lower income brackets. For this reason we must be careful not to overburden those who can least afford it. However I believe that if everyone receives the services provided, then everyone should share in the cost, depending upon their financial ability.

I believe the current tax rates that the County has responsibility for- i.e. county property tax, occupational tax, and fire dues, are fair and reasonable. Fiscal Court does not set the rates for school taxes, library tax, extension office tax, health department tax and state property tax. Here is where I see possible future problems: the increases in the value of used vehicles and real property. For while the rates themselves may stay the same, valuations may reflect significant increases, thereby increasing costs to the taxpayer. The local government must be vigilant and ready to set up a system to guard against this. Taxpayers should not get sticker shock when they get their tax bills- through no fault of their own.