

SARATOGA SPRINGS DEMOCRATIC PARTY

2009 PLATFORM

Preamble: This Platform articulates and defines the visions, hopes and expectations of the Saratoga Springs Democratic Committee, its nominees and elected officials. Additionally, we support the platform of the State of New York and the National Democratic Committees including affordable and accessible health care for everyone.

Our Core Values

Open Government

We believe in open, responsive, efficient, and fiscally responsible government where every citizen has an equal voice to offer ideas, comments and criticism, and opportunity to seek participation on municipal boards. We expect accountability, cost control, and competence in all City Departments. Open government ensures that all voices are heard and all discussion is pursued with courtesy, regardless of diverse opinions and points of view.

A

ccountability of Elected Officials

We believe that elected officials' primary obligation is to their constituents. We support candidates for City Council and County Supervisor who will act in the best interests of the citizens of Saratoga Springs in accordance with the principles of this Platform.

We support the fullest possible public participation in all areas of government. We expect Council members to treat fellow Council members and the public with respect and civility. We uphold the right of citizens to have access to government materials. Denying members of the community or the press access to public records denies citizens that which is held in common trust for their benefit. We require that all business be conducted in the public forum. Accordingly, we believe that all elected officials must, as a matter of principle, act in the spirit of the Public Officers Law, not simply the letter of the law, regarding open meetings and timely access to all public records.

Minutes of all Council, Board and Commission meetings shall be available at City Hall and on the City website as prescribed by the Open Meetings Law. Elected officials must work for the benefit of all citizens, not special interests. The City's two County Supervisors must likewise act in the interests of the City as the County's major economic force.

Sustainability

We believe that all City codes, ordinances, policies and procedures should advance the goal of a sustainable City, recognizing that economics and technology will continue to evolve, and that the cost of such initiatives must be within the ability of taxpayers and property owners to sustain.

The land use, development and other policies of the City can have a significant impact on whether the City, as a whole, becomes more sustainable. These policies affect, and are affected by:

- Energy consumption patterns,
- Water and natural resource utilization,
- Ecological priorities,
- Open space preservation policies,
- Affordable Housing, and
- Public transportation.

These and other factors can be regional, national or global in character and may therefore be beyond the sole ability of the City to control. This, however, does not relieve the City of its responsibility to participate in all initiatives that can ameliorate these factors.

Labor

We support collective bargaining and the concept of a fair day's pay for a day's work. While everyone must share in the burden of the current economy, labor must not be asked to bear a greater burden than business.

Democratic Issues for Saratoga Springs .

Economic Development and the Local Economy

Our economy is in recession; the demands on local government to do more with less are greater. In an unforgiving economic environment, we must engage all citizens in our community to search for creative answers to familiar problems.

Our educated work force and proximity to the Northway and other transportation links provide the City an advantage in attracting businesses. The City must focus on appropriate development to improve and contribute to a balanced economy. We must strive for better and more creative development, not necessarily bigger development.

The most important policy is to maintain Downtown as the City's economic center. It is imperative to strengthen our successful, compact and defined commercial and pedestrian center rather than yield

to unbounded, costly geographic expansion of the City's primary commercial area. The Downtown must serve the needs of both visitors and residents.

We encourage the continued vitalization and redevelopment of the downtown area with mixed-use infill, and rehabilitation that is architecturally compatible with our historic city. We must develop an economic plan to promote Saratoga Springs as a place where business thrives. This includes crafting and promoting a "buy locally" campaign that supports the City's economy and brings a range of job opportunities for residents.

Open space and Parks

Saratoga Springs is known as the "City in the Country," a title first coined by the City Democratic Committee as a sign of its unyielding commitment to an open space preservation ethic. Achieving responsible growth while preserving open space is vital to the future of the City, not only as a "quality of life" issue but also, in recognition of its positive economic benefits. We share residents' concerns about maintaining an economically vibrant downtown and the potential overdevelopment of outlying areas. Suburban sprawl is antithetical to the land use policies of our City. We endorse the revised Comprehensive Plan and urge the City Council to pass the updated version. We support the amended zoning ordinance, particularly the retention of the conservation development districts and gateways. We oppose commercial development of the open space east of the Northway between Lake Avenue

and the Exit 14 gateway.

We recommit to the principle that we must preserve and maintain our parks and historical resources. Toward that end, we support a greater stewardship of our important public outdoor monuments and art work (especially those in Congress Park) and the maintenance of existing public parks and recreation areas. These resources have been entrusted to our care and we must be good and wise stewards. We also support investment in sound historic preservation programs and services.

Budget

We are committed to realistic city budgets. Operating budgets that overestimate revenues, fail to reduce wasteful spending, spend down fund balances and raid the contingency budget are dangerous fiscal management. Non-essential positions must be reduced through attrition and targeted retirement incentives. Layoffs – and their devastating impacts on community families – must only be a last resort. The runaway cost of outside legal services must be reigned in.

At the same time we must utilize our resources to build necessary infrastructure such as the proposed public safety facility. Fiscal responsibility also means building necessary infrastructure in a timely manner before costs escalate.

We only support spending plans that are backed by fiscal resources. Servicing the debt on the new Indoor Recreation Facility must include having facility

operation and maintenance costs recovered from existing Recreation Budget appropriations and/or user fees. Additionally, once the debt on the City's two ice rinks is retired, that portion of the debt service budget should be used to pay debt on the Indoor Recreation Facility, not simply be seen as "new" revenue.

We also affirm our support for preserving the Veterans and income eligible elderly real property tax exemptions.

Affordable Housing

We must work to increase our supply of affordable housing. The range of housing prices must match the range of jobs in the City. We support initiatives in the central part of the City where the possibility of walking to work exists.

Saratoga Race Course and Racino

The Saratoga Race Course, opened in 1863, is the jewel of America's thoroughbred racing and the oldest continuously operating thoroughbred track in the country. The city's economic health and vibrancy is tied to the success of the summer racing season. We must be watchful of the track's historic preservation and that of its environs, including the Oklahoma Track, while maintenance and modernization projects take place. The City must partner with the County and the State to ensure that appropriate resources are available to offset the expenses to the City. The City needs to have a role

in the Horse Track Related Districts respecting land use, site-planning, and design review.

All Racino revenues are generated within the City. Therefore, the city must obtain a portion of these revenues from the State and the County to support the police, fire and infrastructure services that it provides. In addition, monies must be allocated to the city for expenses directly related to social services, such as, gambling addiction, domestic violence, alcoholism and drug addiction, and related family/social issues.

Parking and Traffic

We support addressing the issue of paid parking in limited areas of our downtown, with a thorough dialogue and assessment of the question. Potential revenues for effective municipal operations should be considered. Traffic on our city streets, especially truck traffic, is problematic, and must be addressed through appropriate funding and planning.

Town and Gown

We are proud that so many in our college community have chosen to commit themselves to the political life of our city. We champion and encourage the right of every qualified student to participate in the electoral process, and to vote unimpeded.

Government Reform

Our commission form of government manifests inherent conflicts and inefficiencies. We believe that after due deliberation with open and public input of the entire community, this question of change should be decided by public referendum. We support changing our form of government.