



# **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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## **Chamber Endorses Bob Johnson For City Council**

The Lodi Chamber Board of Directors is proud to announce its support for **Bob Johnson** for Lodi City Council. The Chamber interviewed all 5 council candidates individually on the same evening. The interview panel asked each council member the same battery of questions which covered many major issues currently facing Lodi, as well as follow-up questions to ascertain their philosophical principals exemplifying how they think. "It is a fair process allowing for apples to apples comparison, especially when the interviews are done back-to-back," said Pat Patrick the Lodi Chamber's CEO.

Mr. Johnson has been a consistent supporter of the business community even when it might not be seen as the popular thing to do. As a council member he is not hesitant in his decision-making. He votes to create an environment in which business can grow, provide prosperity and jobs for its citizenry. In the next two years, this will become critical as the business community fights for more industrial zoning in the General Plan. This zoning is the first step in attracting higher-paying industrial jobs to Lodi.

His answers to the panel's questions were quick, crisp and to the point. His knowledge of the issues is demonstrated through his depth of understanding and the thought processes he uses to make decisions. There is no doubt Bob loves Lodi; is quite concerned about preserving the town's character and quality of life, and he believes a strong, local, balanced business economy is a key to those city attributes continuing.

Bob believes more can and should be done to work with the agricultural community to hasten the development of Lodi to a true tourist destination. He sees Lodi's role in the development of the customized AL-5 to be that of a cheerleader supporting the farmer-land owners and recognizes the jurisdiction is the county's and can not be Lodi's.

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Bob is unequivocally in support of the Redevelopment Agency, which will revitalize the eastside and spur private investment leading to job creation and reduce the amount of rundown neighborhoods and opportunity for crime.

Bob says he is in favor of a new Wal-Mart. Bob said the people of Lodi spoke in 2004 through the defeat of Measure R, an anti-large store format initiative. The clear majority voted to defeat the Measure. He sees the jobs and tax revenue the new store will create as pluses for the community.

In summary, Bob has been a consistent pro-business council member and is now a true pro-business candidate for re-election. Approximately 6 months ago Bob asked the council to look into creating and attracting more jobs to Lodi. Economic Development has, in the Chamber's opinion, fallen through the cracks as the city's many needs have taken councils' attention elsewhere. The city now finds itself in a darkening financial picture, jobs create long-term economic stability and health, the "jobs issue" in Lodi needs to be an urgent priority. We believe Bob will bring that issue to the forefront.

Other candidate interviews were illuminating showing differences between 2 newcomers Cliff DeBaugh and Kelly Bates, second-time candidate Roger Khan who ran in 2006, and Mayor JoAnne Mounce.

All candidates were sent information identifying in what areas of interest the Chamber would be asking questions. We did this to see how the candidate would prepare, would they do research, and would they take a position? All the areas of interest have been widely written about in the media, some in the news for years and in the Chamber's Lodi Business Newsletter. The candidates' preparation helped shape our decisions.

**Kelly Bates**, a Government, Economics, Special Ed. and History teacher in SUSD was not familiar enough to answer some of the panels' questions in several instances. Other answers Kelly gave the panel revealed a lack of pro-business leanings. We found him to be thoughtful, a person who deeply cares about his fellow man and community. His reason for running is because he feels new blood is needed on the council.

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**Cliff DeBaugh**, is the owner of BBQs & More, a relatively new business on South Stockton Street that specializes in Bar-B-Q grills, cooking-systems furniture and other items for backyard living. Cliff's reason for running is that he saw a lack of solutions being provided for the city problems. He also said it is better to be a part of the solution than a stay at home critic. We found Cliff to be more of an out of the box thinker and we saw some interesting attributes to his idea of creating a theme or brand for Lodi which highlighted the international cultures found in our city. We parted ways in the area of Redevelopment and several other areas where Cliff's answers left us wanting more. We think that if Cliff does not win the seat this November he should rerun in 2010. With two years of greater knowledge combined with his "solutions provider" mentality Cliff's creativity could generate winning ideas.

**Roger Khan**, is a local realtor for Prudential, a top producer because of his personable manner, optimistic point of view and superior positive attitude towards everything in his life. And if that sounds too flattering, you have not met Roger. Sadly, we found Roger seemingly better prepared for office in 2006 than today. We recognize it is early in this race and believe Roger has the smarts and abilities to make a far better impression. He is a very bright man and when Roger immerses himself into the issues he can be "spot on." Fundamentally we found Roger in sync with many stated Chamber positions but upon questioning we found some confusing answers that created more questions in our minds. Roger could be a spoiler for one of the incumbents.

**JoAnne Mounce**, the current Mayor and other incumbent running this year, will most likely be found in November to be one of the top vote-getters along with Mr. Johnson. The panel found JoAnne a great interview, personable, knowledgeable, and equally committed to Lodi just as much as Mr. Johnson. In most instances she voiced a pro-business attitude in sync with the Chamber's. In our opinion, based on her comments, nailed the city's best course for helping the AI-5 solution become our community separator. We know of her efforts with Supervisor Ken Vogel, and Armstrong Road property owners and applaud her efforts at that coalition-building table.

There is really only one reason the Chamber is not making a dual

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endorsement including JoAnne. On issues such as Redevelopment, Wal-Mart and the General Plan, 3 of the biggest issues in 2008-09 for Lodi, JoAnne voiced sentiment matching the Chamber's, however there is no personal support, no vocal decision, no clear stated position, no "out in front leadership" exhibited on these key issues.

In the question of whether or not she supports a new Wal-Mart, she answered by saying, "it is a land use decision." To that we say the land has been zoned for large-retail for over a decade, and the citizenry of Lodi spoke through the defeat of Measure R. Why does the Mayor wait for the opinion of an out of town attorney and judge to say what's good or not good for Lodi?

JoAnne's position on Redevelopment is puzzling for the Chamber. Unquestionably the benefits that will accrue to the eastside through an RDA are vast. The eastside is the Mayor's stated passion. The Redevelopment Agency is the ONLY saving solution seen for a troubled eastside. Yet she takes no personal position, leaving the economic needs of half the city to the opinion of many people who are motivated by unwarranted fear, misinformation and falsehoods.

Likewise, JoAnne has not voiced an opinion on the city consultants General Plan ideas. When asked what she liked or disliked about the plans and if she thought any of the plans adequately provided for industrial job expansion she simply said, "Her job is to listen," JoAnne would give no position.

In these challenging times, the City as does the business community needs leaders who will lead and not abdicate their decision-making responsibility. The city council members are the only people in the community in which all of Lodi has put their trust. Voting for them means we trust them to make decisions. Their job is to make decisions. In most cases, no other person has more information than a city council member with which to make an informed decision. When no decision is made or no position is taken issues can become needless, expensive ballot measures costing everyone time and money.

Council members who won't or don't take a position, or make a decision on seminal, key issues force the business community into costly corners. The business community risks millions of dollars and thousands of jobs in executing plans. A non-decision or no-position does not tell just how "pro-business" a candidate really is, thus eliminating consistency and causing the Chamber to withhold its endorsement.

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