

1550 W. Crandon Court
Crystal Lake, Illinois 60014
13 February 2021

Dennis LaComb
Technology & Manufacturing Association
1651 Wilkening Road
Schaumburg, IL 60173

Dear Mr. LaComb,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer your 2021 Illinois Municipal Candidate Questionnaire. While most of your questions are looking for support/oppose responses and I can easily circle the responses you desire, the topics are not as simple as that and I will try and explain my thoughts for the benefit of your members.

I am happy to answer any further questions and look forward to your endorsement.

Candidate: Donald E. Kountz
Campaign Address: 1550 W Crandon Ct.
Crystal Lake, IL 60014

Running for: Mayor of Crystal Lake
Campaign Phone: 815.451.5280
Email: DonKountz4CLMayor@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

Donald E. Kountz and his wife Linnea have lived in Crystal Lake since 1986. They have two sons Erik and Brian. They are members of Bethany Lutheran Church. Kountz has been an officer of his homeowners association since 2002, been a volunteer judge for FIRST competitions. As the son of a steelworker and nurse, he grew up in the shadow of large scale industrial manufacturing supported by thousands of small manufactures and businesses. He has seen importance of having a healthy manufacturing base to sustain a community. Kountz retired after 35 years from Northrop Grumman as Senior Director of Advanced Projects responsible for yearly sales in excess of \$100M. He graduated from Purdue University with a BS in Electrical Engineering. Kountz is a fiscal conservative believing in being a good steward of the residents and businesses tax dollars. He will be huge supporter of any manufacturer looking to settle or expand in the City of Crystal Lake.

TAXATION

Do you support/oppose allowing local governments to abate all or a portion of their property tax for small manufactures? *The City of Crystal Lake has a vibrant economy benefiting its 40,000+ residents and over 3,700 business supporting a work force of 22,500+ employees. As such the City of Crystal Lake's property tax is approximately 10% of a property's the total. As mayor, I will be vigilant in looking for ways to decrease expenses for small manufactures which bring quality jobs to the city.*

Do you support/oppose freezing the municipal tax levy at its current amount so the tax rate can start to come down on property owners can begin to see much needed tax relief? *As mayor, I will continue the city's effort to keep its property tax as low as possible.*

Do you support/oppose creating a tax exemption for energy used in the manufacturing process? *Illinois has the lowest average cost of electricity of all Great Lakes states and some of the lowest industrial natural gas costs of all Great Lakes states. While the cost of utilities is mostly determined and regulated at the state level I support keeping cost of energy for all of Crystal Lake low.*

Do you support/oppose adding purchases of production-related, tangible personal property to manufacturing machinery and equipment exempted from sales tax? *This is enacted at the state legislature not the municipal level and as such is out of my jurisdiction.*

MINIMUM WAGE

Do you support/oppose the phase in of the state minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2025? *This is the current Public Law of Illinois. Laws on minimum wage are enacted at the state level not at the municipal level and as such are out of my jurisdiction.*

Would you encourage legislators to support/oppose amending the law to create a regional implementation plan where areas with a higher cost of living (ie. Chicago) would face a higher minimum wage than suburban or downstate regions? *As mayor, I would support finding a better than one size fits all solution.*

Do you support/oppose a lower minimum wage (training wage) for teenagers who work less than 650 hours/year? *As you know Illinois has a lower minimum wage for minors under age 18 and has a lower "new employees" minimum wage for individuals over 18. Additional changes to this portion of the minimum wage law is enacted at the state level not at the municipal level and as such is out of my jurisdiction.*

REGULATION

Manufacturing operations often require special needs that don't fit perfectly into municipal zoning classifications. Do you support/oppose providing flexibility through variances to allow manufacturing companies to locate or expand in your community? *Yes, as mayor, I would strongly encourage city staff to work with any manufactures looking to discuss any zoning and variance questions and I support a manufacturer's request to ask for variations to municipal zoning classifications for both flexibility and expansion in Crystal Lake.*

If elected, would you support/oppose waiving or reducing tap-on fees and/or providing other incentives to encourage manufacturers to build new facilities in your municipality? *I am willing to review both the different types and magnitude Crystal Lake's tap-on fees to encourage growth in the City of Crystal Lake.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous strains on manufacturers, who have faced significant interference from the State of Illinois while trying to provide essential products our society needs. Our manufacturing facilities are already among the safest and healthiest workplaces with employee health and safety the top priority. Do you support/oppose the Illinois mandatory lockdowns that have limited commerce here while manufacturers in surrounding states prosper? *I was not aware of any manufacturer that had a mandatory lockdown preventing its business operations from continuing. If elected, I would safely meet with any manufacturer within the City of Crystal Lake to work through the red tape as necessary to allow them to prosper. I would also continue and expand the city's past practice to apply for grants for businesses effected by COVID-19.*

GENERAL

- 1) Why are you running for office? *I am running for office because over the past four years, I have seen many examples where the Mayor and City Council did not put in their due diligence or ably direct the city staff to work with and communicate with other local governments. A vote for me is a vote for renewed leadership that looks out for the welfare and pocketbooks of all Crystal Lake residents, taxpayers and businesses.*
- 2) What do you hope to accomplish if you are elected? *Open, honest, transparent, fair government for both taxpayers and businesses. On July 7, 2020 the City Council approved a sole source no bid contract, for an estimated \$141,000 for work that two years prior was budgeted at \$53,600. Neither the Mayor nor any of the City Council even question the increased cost being paid by the city businesses and residents. My previous work in contracts will make sure such opportunities are properly announced, bid, reviewed and awarded.*
- 3) Why should a manufacturer support your candidacy? *I grew up in neighborhood located on the far south west portion of Lake Michigan. A region built and thriving on the large industrial manufacturing and support businesses located there. I have seen the communities struggle and suffer for decades as these companies closed or moved away. I will be huge supporter of any manufacturer looking to settle or expand in the City of Crystal Lake.*