

Personal Background and Qualifications

Please provide a brief overview of your professional background and experience. How have these experiences prepared you for the role of Payson Town Council member?

I graduated high school from The Abbey School in Canon City, CO, a private boarding school run by the Benedictine Monks of Holy Cross Abbey.

I graduated from Colorado State University in Ft Collins, CO with a bachelor degree in Business Administration. I also earned my Private Pilot license during that time.

I worked at Valley Bag and Chemical Company Inc., duties included managing currency and raw material futures contracts with burlap mills in Bangladesh.

I worked at Marshall Produce as Facilities Manager.

I worked at Pepper Potato Farms as General Manager and Marketing Director.

I worked at Sanderson Farms as Plant Expansion Manager.

July of 1987 I founded Stephen D Otto Mechanical Services which became OttoMation Equipment Co. 31 years running my business allowed me to hone my financial discipline and goal development skills. I designed multi-million dollar produce processing facilities, sold and installed individual packaging machines, and designed, built and installed custom produce equipment. Working out of my warehouse in Monte Vista, Colorado I traveled from Vancouver British Columbia to Houston, Texas and Los Mochis, Mexico to Nebraska and all points in between.

My money management skills allowed me to buy and begin refurbishing a foreclosed home in Payson in 2011. We bought a second distressed property in Payson early 2015. We moved to Payson full time in 2015 and I retired completely in 2018. We bought our third and final property in Payson August of 2020. I have no debt beyond credit cards which are paid in full every month.

I will be a good steward of the land, resources and finances for the residents of Payson, Arizona.

Have you had any prior experience in public service or community involvement? If so, please detail your roles and contributions.

Monte Vista, Colorado found itself in financial difficulty to the point Excel Energy sent the disconnect notices for town hall and town buildings. I was an alternate on the citizens advisory board tasked with navigating the financial morass the town found itself ensnared. The town's financial woes began 50 years earlier with the construction of an indoor swimming pool complex the town couldn't afford. The pool was demolished 2005, town hall was sold to Sunflower Bank and the power stayed on. I was an advocate for the Splash Pad before the project was killed by some of the council men and women who were all smiles voting for the "new" Splash Pad.

I was on the Payson Parks and Recreation Commission until my dismissal for trying to defend Taylor Pool.

I am treasurer of the Rim Wildfire Awareness Team, certified FireWise evaluator and focused on the safety of Payson Residents.

What is the single most important thing you want to accomplish while on the council?

The most important thing to accomplish as Mayor is the restoration of public trust in town hall.

Infrastructure and Services (please briefly answer these questions):

Do you want Payson to double in size as the General Plan envisions?

The growth of Payson is up to the residents of Payson, I became aware of Payson in 1996 and the majority of big projects have never come to fruition, University Campus, Charter School, Hockey Academy and other projects.

Should Payson adopt a fire-hardened WUI building code for new construction to reduce the risk of a wildfire spreading through town?

Under no circumstances should Payson adopt the International Wildland Urban Interface Code. The land use and infrastructure aspects of the code would require demolition of about a third of Payson's homes. IWUI Code requires all subdivisions have two points of access, roads must be wide enough for fire equipment to pass, houses can be no closer than 30' to each other and there is a limit on the number of trees per acre.

Hardening certain building codes will help aspects of Payson's fire threats but current town codes are not being enforced regarding combustible material stored near homes, trash in yards.

How do you intend to address affordable housing in Payson?

It is not Payson's place to get involved in picking winners and losers in the housing arena. I will push for a level playing field for all developers bringing housing options to the town for approval. The recent approval of a housing complex south of American Gulch offers no help for work force housing.

Do you favor the council's decision to permanently extend the .88 cent sales tax? Would you reverse that decision?

My opinions on the extension of the .88% tax or the passage of the additional 1% sales tax are immaterial, the tax revenues will most likely be pledged to fund a bond issue.

Do you favor the council's decision to add a \$.01 cent sales tax to finance a 20-year, \$50 million bond to make infrastructure improvements? If not, would you vote to reverse that decision?

Using a \$50,000,000 bond to finance an Aquatic Center is irresponsible, Payson is faced with many more pressing needs. I'm told the land for the Aquatic Center is under contract, where is it?

Do you think that Payson adequately supports new business – or does it over-regulate and add costly but unnecessary conditions?

Payson doesn't embrace new business, town hall is too involved picking winners and losers to create a level playing field for all comers.

How should Payson support the MHA Granite Dells Park, if at all?

Granite Dells Park was built without Payson's involvement and should operate without Payson's involvement.

Would you as a council member act to restore the citizens' right to approve major projects, expenditures and leases to effectively replace Proposition 401 and 402, which were ruled unconstitutional by the courts?

I will vote to support any citizens initiative. The litigation regarding Props 401, 402 is in the appeals process and the issue is far from settled.

Does Payson do an adequate job of maintaining streets? If not, how much more should we spend and what would you cut elsewhere to free up the money?

Payson's streets are an embarrassment, no vision, no leadership from current town leaders. From 2012 to 2024 the LGIP account grew \$40,000,000, that's Payson's money on deposit with the Arizona State Treasurer. I know there are some HURF monies sequestered in the LGIP account.

Do you support spending \$30 million on the community center and swim center?

\$30,000,000 for an Aquatic Center is irresponsible when there are more pressing needs.

Do you support spending \$11 million to cover and upgrade the event center? Would you pay for it from the proposed sales tax supported bond issue? If not, how would you pay for it?

The event center needs water, sewer, restrooms and a cover. The nature of those improvements remains to be seen.

Do you support the plan to spend \$1 million on the trails system from the bond money?

Do you support the plan to spend \$5 million on improvements to Main Street and the American Gulch with the sales tax bond money?

Do you support the plan to use the sales tax financed bond to complete roughly \$6 million in improvements to Rumsey Park?

Do you support using the sales tax financed bond move to add \$3 million in one-time improvements to police and fire stations?

Do you support using the sales tax bond money to increase street maintenance by \$2 million annually?

Do you support the proposal to seek voter approval of a property tax bond to raise \$61 million to pay for a new police station, road improvements, new fire stations and Green Valley Parkway extension?

All the questions about spending portions of the bond monies are irrelevant until the Aquatic Center is built and the final cost overruns have been factored in. 30 Million for Aquatic center, 10 Million for the land, money for bond underwriting costs, hold back for Aquatic Center maintenance and the whole 50 Million is spent.

Refer to the 2023 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report because it shows Payson will hit an Arizona statutory limit for issuing General Obligation Bonds before \$61MM is raised. Payson is about to hit its credit limit.

Leadership and Vision

Has the council been responsive to citizen concerns? If not, what would you do differently?

The repeated use of the emergency clause has trampled the rights of Payson citizens.

How would you define your leadership style, and how would it influence your approach as a council member?

I don't make rash statements or knee jerk decisions.

There are many decisions that cannot be made until the damage from this town council is thoroughly examined.

Why should the residents of Payson elect you as their next Town Council member?

Payson residents should elect me because I am forthright and thorough. Stephen Otto, Candidate for Payson Mayor