

# **Water Users Coalition**

## **Questions to the AWBD Candidates**

### **June 2019**

- 1. In a few words, what do you think is the most important thing we need to do (focus on) in order to ensure AWBD is a sustainable organization?**

**Tom Sprague – Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Education and new members are most vital is where the next few years should strongly focus on. We cannot think that we're going to get immediate results from the many projects we have taken on recently. There are times when we need to take a step back and see how our efforts are impacting our mission. We cannot keep spreading ourselves to thin by taking on too many projects. I see the need to focus on putting the priority effort on education and the new member's committee.

**Dwayne Mason – Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I believe that ensuring that AWBD is a sustainable organization will be achieved by expanding its current effort and establishing new goals to get the word out about the great things that AWBD and the Districts have done and will do, namely, to (1) deliver the highest quality water in an efficient and economical fashion; (2) manage the district operations, expenses and taxes efficiently; and (3) utilize technology and data analytics to maximize efficiencies within the districts, advocate districts across the entire state, mitigate catastrophes and risks, and to establish best practices for the members. These are the goals that I would work to champion as a Trustee.

**Rick Ellis – Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Recruit new members by showing them the value of the organization. Encourage camaraderie and cooperation amongst districts. Get/keep members engaged – you get out of something what you put in. Promote district unity against negativity towards our industry.

**Mike Rozell – Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Help our water districts have a stronger voice! Clear communication and focusing on being "proactive" is key. Design a plan (1 yr., 5 yrs.) to grow our membership. It must expand the communication between its members. Communicate more with news flashes. Members that are more involved are more satisfied.

**Luis Zervigon – Candidate for Central Texas Regional Trustee**

We need to focus on many things so I'm reluctant to stipulate that there is a "most important thing." That being said, the following are important: Keeping our membership informed about things that will materially impact MUD/PUDS including: crucial legislation; TCEQ actions; local Government decisions; and, other regulatory issues.

**2. What would you do as an AWBD trustee to help MUD/PUDs?**

**Tom Sprague - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Communicate more directly with our members, to be a Board member we have to listen as well as we speak. Let's build on the very foundation of that we have in place. We do have to be careful of not changing the system but learn the existing system before we start making changes.

**Dwayne Mason - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I would work as an AWBD Trustee in all of its efforts to help Districts, with particular focus on the three areas that I listed in 1 above. I believe my experience as a Director, Lawyer and Engineer strategically positions me to be an at large Trustee. In this regard, I have over twenty years of combined experience as a director in HC MUD 222 and HCID #18. In addition, I am an Intellectual Property Lawyer who specializes in technology and graduated from the University of Houston Law Center and graduated from Purdue University with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Prior to practicing law, I was a Professional Engineer in Texas. My engineering experience includes work in the oilfield, refineries, chemical plants, power plants, and important to AWBD, significant experience in water and waste water treatment and operations. In fact, I recently obtained a patent for a client on a new and novel way to efficiently operate and control municipal water filters to minimize water loss during backwash. I have also obtained patents for clients in the area of data analytics, machine learning, and benchmarking. I regularly speak about these issues and litigate related matters in federal and state courts, arbitration proceedings, and in the United States Patent and Trademark Office where I defend and obtain patents and trademarks for my clients.

**Rick Ellis - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

My professional career is economic development, which involves working with utility districts to attract, and cooperate with, land developers and end users. I manage a council of utility district directors and consultants that positively promotes the water industry to the business community as well as to the general public. We also engage in educational programs to spread positive news. I would carry forward this experience and advance these efforts to the Board level.

**Mike Rozell - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I would suggest looking at expanding all committees. I would use my experience as Fort Bend County Judge and as Director of Economic Development for Harris County Judges Robert Eckels and Ed Emmett. I have enormous contacts and believe it is important to communicate to the public and our elected officials. I would use my political acumen to help water districts. I am a “hands on” person and want to be involved in my community.

**Luis Zervigon – Candidate for Central Texas Regional Trustee**

I will focus on issues that will be of particular interest to Central Texas that will support generating a growth of AWBD membership in Central Texas

**3. How can we enhance AWBD’s efforts of educating the public, the press, other media, and other government officials about the true value of MUDs?**

**Tom Sprague - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I think the “Water Users Coalition” is on the right track, in that there focused on the operational side of water districts. With over six-hundred (more than two-thirds) MUDS in our membership a stronger focus on the operational side would help.

**Dwayne Mason - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Those efforts can be enhanced through a commitment by all Trustees to re-double their efforts to get the word out about the specific and tangible work that is being done by AWBD and the Districts. This necessarily means that a strategic plan needs to be established and quickly launched to ensure immediate returns. This will require time commitments from the Trustees and Advisory Board members and a financial commitment from AWBD and the Districts. I envision that these efforts will not only be beneficial to AWBD and the Districts, but will also benefit the State of Texas. Therefore, I propose that we employ the legislative assets of AWBD to partner with the State to accomplish these goals.

**Rick Ellis - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Take the message to the people. Hold open houses, seminars, educational events. Put out white papers. Write editorials. Invite influential industry decision-makers to our conferences. Have conference presenters give modified versions of their presentations to interested parties; such as brown bag lunches. Encourage districts to get the good word out however possible.

**Mike Rozell - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I believe our “FOCUS” should be on educating our members and government officials. The government officials are the ones that matter and want to know what we do. If we do this the media will take care of itself. Keep our legislature and members informed about what we are doing. AWBD should create a system for the members to report the good work they are doing and then send a report to the state legislature.

**Luis Zervigon – Candidate for Central Texas Regional Trustee**

AWBD has done a good job, following Hurricane Harvey, in developing and disseminating valuable information that dominated the public discourse. That can serve as a model for future public communication.

- 4. The 2019 AWBD LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLE # 11 states the following:  
AWBD opposes any effort to shift responsibility of maintenance for road or related facilities, including storm sewers located within the right of ways or within related easements dedicated to the public or a county, from counties to water districts. DO YOU AS A CANDIDATE SUPPORT PRINCIPAL # 11 AS CURRENTLY WRITTEN? YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_  
\_\_\_ Please comment on your answer.**

**Tom Sprague - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

**Yes** - While we have the responsibility to our residents to maintain the quality of our Districts, I would question at what cost and under what parameters. Who has control over our roads, as exemplified my District is over forty years old and now the MUDS are going to be expected to jump in and solve a problem that has been neglected. I do support this Principle in its present form. Forty to Fifty years of neglect by the County has left us all in a very bad situation.

**Dwayne Mason - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

**Yes** - It seems clear that the maintenance for roads or related facilities set forth in Principal # 11 is a county wide responsibility and concern. As such, any expense should be born by the County and not water districts. As such, any efforts by counties to shift the responsibility and expense to water districts should be rejected.

**Rick Ellis - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

**Yes** - Counties need to take responsibility for their responsibilities. MUDs are not in the business of road maintenance and upkeep nor are MUDs responsible for infrastructure in ROWs or easements. MUDs' top priorities are the providing of water, wastewater, and drainage services. Let the districts' constituents get the benefit of their county tax dollars.

**Mike Rozell - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

**Yes** - MUDs should have the responsibility of maintaining the water and sanitary sewer systems installed within the Boundaries of their own districts. Period! MUDs finance and construct the roads and storm sewers. Storm sewers then become a part of the roads. When the county accepts the roads they accept the storm sewer systems. MUDs should only be responsible for maintaining the water and sanitary sewers.

**Luis Zervigon – Candidate for Central Texas Regional Trustee**

**Yes** - This is a continuing problem and it will only get worse as economic pressure increases on local funding sources. AWBD should focus on this issue by developing a resource base that can help MUD's/PUD's confront such local initiatives.

**5. What in particular would like to achieve as an AWBD Trustee?**

**Tom Sprague - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

As I've been telling members in my campaign "I am a Directors director", I am focused on operations. I have been on my Board for the past fourteen years. I've attended most of our conferences, breakfasts, dinners and annual events. What do the members want from us not just what we want to give to them? Open the lines of communication and have our Board members be more visible to them.

**Dwayne Mason - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I would like to achieve the tangible goals set forth in my response to question 1 above.

**Rick Ellis - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

Greater acceptance of the industry by business leaders, elected officials and the general public. And of course, the media. Accentuate the positive. I want to advocate for the industry, and for AWBD – whether it's in Austin before the legislature, or at a small community town hall meeting. I want to represent the goodness of MUDs.

**Mike Rozell - Candidate for at Large Positions – Board of Trustees**

I would use my experiences as serving as a MUD director for 20 years, elected official, economic development director and current chairman of Gulf Coast Economic Development Corporation to educate through various means the media, legislature and all others that are not a part of AWBD to understand the importance of our organization.

**Luis Zervigon – Candidate for Central Texas Regional Trustee**

- A) Identify potential new Central Texas AWBD member MUD's and PUD's and recruit them to grow our presence in that underserved area.
- B) Assure that the AWBD includes program features that will speak to some of the unique Central Texas interests.