

MY PLATFORM
John R Menke Sr
Candidate for City Council
Mt Vernon IL
April 4, 2017 election



Bumper Stickers: \$1 each, first one free with SASE or stamp, 723 Barton, Mt Vernon; or PM/email me.

Contact info

Facebook: @Menke4MtVernon (non-partisan campaign page)

Facebook: @Johnny.Bob.3956 (personal/partisan page)

Twitter: #Menke_Vernon

Website: www.johnnybob.com (since 1999)

Email: xusa@johnnybob.com

Phone: see local phone book, fax number on request

About me...

Education: MVTHS, Class of '57; Mt Vernon Jr College, Class of '59; BA SIU 1962 (chem & math); MA SIU 1963 (organic chem, Prof Beyler); PhD program 1963-1967, WSU-Detroit (organic chem, Prof LeBel)

Careers: chemistry, lawn mowing (retired from both)

Publications/Specialties: several publications in chem & medical journals, organic synthesis, small bridged cyclic molecules, anti-malarial drugs, nerve gas prophylactics, flame retardants

Employment: NSF Fellow, Chem Dept, WSU-Detroit MI; NASA-Ames Research Center, Moffett Field CA; Ash-Stevens Inc, Detroit; among others

Life experiences: I was on a straight and narrow path to fame and fortune as a young man. Then I was divorced and started thinking outside the box in the late 1960's, looking for meaning in life. Became a semi-hippy, opponent of the Vietnam war, enjoyed traveling US Route 66, hitchhiked around California, stood at corner of Haight-Ashbury Streets in 1967, left my heart in San Francisco, played music for awhile (piano guitar flute koto). Then I transitioned into a free-lance entrepreneur, started & managed businesses, gambler for awhile in Vegas, mail order marketing, family genealogy book author, wrote computer software, investing and benefactoring.

Hobbies: In my youth our family was all ham radio operators here in Mt Vernon in the 1950's. I was W9EXL. I enjoyed golf through my middle years. After returning to Mt Vernon in 1979, I developed an interest in computers starting with a Commodore 64. Since then I've spent a lot of time writing software, tech troubleshooting, and maintaining my website at johnnybob.com. I also enjoy yard work, feeding the

local birds & squirrels, fauna & flora, and watching old movies. I just recently joined Facebook. I've always enjoyed the game of chess. I'm currently rated #1 CC player in the USA by USCF. I was also awarded the title of International Master by ICCF.

Favorite book: *"The True Believer"* by Eric Hoffer 1951. It was also President Eisenhower's favorite book. This important work discusses the social psychology of mass movements and the demonization techniques they use. Let me know if interested and I'll get you a free copy!

People I admire: Albert Sweitzer, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa, Stephen Hawking, Frederick Douglass, Linus Pauling

Purpose in life: Family is always #1. After that, I try to elevate the public consciousness re peace, love, and environment. Quality of life is more important than money--the real kind, not the fake kind produced in some video promos for Mt Vernon. Reducing environmental health risks for our town and area is very important. I also hope to improve Facebook which has become the way most people communicate now. There is far too much hate and partisan politics on Facebook, and I'm guilty too. Maybe we can do better by common agreement and mutual respect.

Nickname: Some may remember me from the old *Register-News* forum as "Johnny Bob", my nickname for the last 70 years. I like it better than some other things I've been called. :) Although I don't seek it, I'm not a stranger to controversy because I try to be objective, ignore preconceptions. I'm a natural born iconoclast, it seems.

Personal: I'm 77 years old, single, divorced, father of twin sons, and live on a small monthly Social Security check. Thus I am below the poverty line, like nearly 1 in 4 Mt Vernon residents. So I am truly a poor man's candidate, but manage OK by pinching pennies. It works. I know from first hand experience.

Health: Fair. I've survived 2 cancers, colon-rectal and kidney 2010-2012 including chemo, radiation, and several surgeries. I'm having increased difficulty walking, apparently Parkinson's disease. But I might have a few good years left if I'm lucky. This run for City Council is probably my last public effort.

Philosophy: I am people oriented, NOT business oriented! I will always give the people and our environment #1 consideration. Business and money interests will always come #2! That said, I'll be happy to work with businesses and developers who practice good ethics, in tune with Mt Vernon's future best interests.

Methodology: We must take things one at a time, start small, get max input, pro & con, experiment, then scale up when/if appropriate. That's how I performed successful research & development in the chemistry laboratory, and it should work fine with city management chores too.

What's the main city problem?

The current city plan and direction is wrong. Instead I offer the following general notions of how we should best proceed...

As several other candidates and concerned citizens have pointed out... Our town is in a financial crisis with a \$83+ million deficit compared to less than \$1 million owed 8 years ago.

How did that happen?

I believe it was caused mainly by obsession with tourism, festivals, eye candy, pretty plastic parts and signs, building & maintaining an expensive new City Hall West, and domination of our governance by Jefferson County Development Corporation (JCDC) and the Chamber of Commerce (CC).

How to fix it?

Stop those financial drains ASAP! Stop funding JCDC and CC (i.e. private business and investors) with huge municipal bonds! Taxpayers will be obliged to pay off those bonds eventually, probably by increased property taxes. The city should also get out of the real estate business. For example the city currently owns the Armory and old Park Plaza shopping mall, apparently through JCDC. Both are money pits! Such things are also best left to private development & financing.

Recriminations do no good. We should learn from those past mistakes then move forward from here, as best we can. Optimism is fine, but realism is also a necessity. Sorry, but it just didn't work. No more gambling on unlikely revenue streams. Tell the slick promo artists and pie-in-the-sky salesmen to take a hike!

We've got a job to do. We must live within our means, avoid unnecessary spending and unsound speculations about rapid growth. We won't get ahead by borrowing money, issuing bonds, taking out mortgages to live off of future generations. We will do best with a steady-as-it-goes attitude, paying down our debts in a regular fashion, and by working hard. Eventually we will balance the city books again then other better opportunities may present themselves. We could get lucky in the meantime but don't bet on it.

Westward expansion of Mt Vernon has gone far enough! Our downtown area, south side, and near east side have been sadly neglected. Those areas see the wrecking demolition ball almost daily and high crime rates. It's time to bring them back up to equal par, fix the streets and alleys, stop the demolitions, and improve police protection.

To begin...

I suggest we revitalize the city square, starting with the Jefferson County Courthouse. The same standards as City Hall West should apply. Remove the large obnoxious sign with rules & prohibitions, the blockade, and body scanners at the south door entrance. Reopen all doors on the north, east, south, and west, and make it an open friendly place which citizens can enjoy visiting once again! It must also be made easily accessible for the handicapped.

It's also EXTREMELY IMPORTANT to reopen 7th Street near the old high school for vehicle traffic, to the benefit of everyone and all businesses in that area. This, combined with courthouse rejuvenation, will give a nice economic & psychological boost to that area, and our town in general. People have lost faith in our government. Morale is low. This is a way to turn that around.

The new NRE fence with barbed wire, surrounding the old Big Lots, is a serious eyesore. Looks like a prison stockade or wartime bunker. They must bring it up to standards for a neighborhood area, or leave town... pronto! We don't need that sort of thing in Mt Vernon!

I oppose industrial development of that area as a major railroad switching operation as has been rumored. That includes also the Armory, old high school, Park Plaza, southward to old Jefferson Memorial Hospital. It should be zoned as a neighborhood area with small businesses allowed.

I will vote to...

RE-OPEN 7th STREET IMMEDIATELY!
REPEAL THE WATER METER TAX AND RATE INCREASE!
REPEAL THE ANTI-PUBLIC INPUT AMENDMENT (AGENDA ITEM 9A)!

Analysis & References:

(1) Mt Vernon City has an oligarchy form of government dominated by business/corporate \$ interests. Freedom of speech is restricted. Input from ordinary people is ignored. For example: Jefferson County Development Corporation (JCDC) receives \$150,000/year cash from City + free office space at City Hall West (200 Potomac Blvd), all at taxpayer expense. Ref:

www.jeffcodev.org/board_directors.html

www.johnnybob.com/images/JCDC.zip (Everything+)

www.johnnybob.com/images/JCDC.pdf

www.johnnybob.com/images/Ordinance_2003-39_Economic_Development.pdf (FOIA)

www.johnnybob.com/images/Prager_Company_Economic_Development_Study_2005.pdf (FOIA)

www.johnnybob.com/images/Resolution_of_Support.tif (FOIA)

Chamber of Commerce apparently also has free office space there at taxpayer expense:

www.southernillinois.com/board-of-directors.html

They're bundled together with the Tourism bureau/department at City Hall West. What else...?

(2) This 2011 Mt Vernon promo video shows some of the key players involved in the Mt Vernon City contract with Milano and the 7th Street closing the following year (on Dec 26 2012):

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKX6R3SQKoo

(3) Here's a copy of the Mt Vernon city contract signed with Milano in Oct 2012. The railroad spur into Milano was completed that same month, so there was no valid reason for the road to remain closed. Milano does not object to reopening 7th Street. It would not interfere with their operations.

www.johnnybob.com/images/FOIA.jpg (FOIA)

www.johnnybob.com/images/FOIA.pdf (FOIA)

Contrary to false rumors, there is NO contract between City of Mt Vernon and the Evansville Western railroad.

(4) Here's the petition by 1,000+ people to reopen 7th Street, submitted to City Council in April 2016 (ignored):

www.johnnybob.com/images/7.pdf (FOIA)

(5) Many wonder why their input and petitions were totally ignored on this and other issues such as the water meter tax, water rate increases, downtown crematory, and rezoning issues. Freedom of speech was stifled even more with this amendment to City ordinances in late 2016:

www.johnnybob.com/images/9A.docx (FOIA, original 9A agenda draft)

www.johnnybob.com/images/9A.pdf (converted)

www.johnnybob.com/images/9A.txt (converted)

(6) Here's a copy of the April 2016 Mt Vernon annual audit (finance report). It fails to address the primary problem... How did the City of Mt Vernon go from less than \$1 million debt to a \$80+ million deficit in only 8 years? In whose pocket(s) does that money now reside?!

www.johnnybob.com/images/City_FS_Audit_04_30_16.pdf

(7) Here's a 2009-2016 collection of minutes of City Council meetings, workshops, and misc [executive sessions, public hearings, retreats, special meetings] useful for research:

www.johnnybob.com/images/mv2009-16_citycouncil.zip (FOIA)

www.johnnybob.com/images/mv2009-16_workshops.zip (FOIA)

www.johnnybob.com/images/mv2009-16_misc.zip (FOIA)

(8) List of candidates in this April 4, 2017 city election:

www.johnnybob.com/images/ballot.png (FOIA)

[Rev 3/14/2017]

Prior versions of this platform were published 3/2/2017 and 11//2016 at www.Facebook.com/Menke4MtVernon
Those ideas still apply, and more, but it's necessary to limit the scope and size somewhat, so people will read it...

