

**FCGG CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS**  
**MAYOR OF FRESNO**  
February 20, 2008

*The questions asked where the same for all candidates and are shown here verbatim. The answers are not verbatim, but a result of consolidated notes taken by three members of FCGG. One mayoral candidate, Tom Boyagian, declined to participate. Candidate Jim Boswell was scheduled to participate, but did not show.*

**QUESTION # 1: *What would your top three to five priorities be as Mayor of Fresno?***

**Henry Monreal:**

1. Public safety - We need to be aware of the problems that Fresno faces.
2. The environment – air quality
3. We need to bring good jobs to Fresno.
4. Quality of Life – Fresno is a good choice for visitors.
5. Water. We need to appreciate our water.
6. Help bring our community together.

Henry explained he has been an employee with the police department for 33 years and is active in the community. He is on the Police Association running team. He wants to bring the community together.

**Jerry Duncan:**

1. Public safety – we need to maintain and grow our public safety. We are short police officers and need to expand to fight war and gangs. Fresno rebuilt the fire department six years ago and we need to continue to do so.
2. Livability – supports parks.
3. Need to improve our air quality and get kids outside.
4. Efficient government – government needs improvement. Private sector – need to cut entitlement process in half. Pre-zoning needs to be consistent with the general plan.

**Henry T. Perea:**

1. Public Safety – gangs and meth are a real problem in Fresno. We need to eliminate the use of methamphetamines in our youth.
2. Air Quality – new innovation
3. Economy – in the short term we need to look at the problem of housing foreclosures.
4. Quality life – maintain and improve our parks, arts and culture.
5. Housing crisis

### **Mike Dages**

1. Crime – There are 24,000 gang members.
2. Jobs/Economy/Education – They all intertwined. Owned vocational school. Most youth want to work, but don't have experience or skills. We need skilled labor in Fresno.
3. Solar – Have always pushed solar. Believes Fresno can be the “Solar Capital of the World” at the same time as being the “Recreation Capitol of the World.” We need to keep kids busy. A great example of keeping kids busy is Woodward Park’s BMX bike park that is under construction. Fresno needs more park space and after school programs.

### **Ashley Swaengin**

We must make progress on all these fronts because they are all closely interrelated.

1. Jobs/Economy/Education – We need to improve our economic conditions. We need to bring everything from inside city hall to make it work for those outside City Hall.
2. Public Safety – We need to focus on safe neighborhoods
3. Effective and responsible government – Make sure that city hall is run better, bottlenecks removed. Surveys of residents and businesses show dissatisfaction.
4. Regional Leadership – We will be constrained in our progress without getting our fair share of resources and attention on policy matters. As the largest City in the Valley, Fresno needs to be a lead advocate and gain support in D.C. and Sacramento.

### **Jeff Eben**

1. Establishing leadership is number one priority – at the federal, state and local level.
1. Public Safety – We need to be tough on crime but also need to look after young people. Gang prevention
2. Education – Work in partnership with the school system. Young kids need to receive their diplomas and have skills.
3. Jobs – important that we support small business.
4. Good Stewards of the environment – this includes water, air and energy

**QUESTION # 2: *The City of Fresno spends a larger percentage of its general fund on public safety than just about all its California peers. Do you think that's appropriate? If so, why? If not, why not and what would you do to change it?***

### **Henry Monreal:**

Unfortunately, Fresno has found it necessary to spend a lot on law enforcement. Over 50 percent of funds are spent on the police budget. Pleased with what the current mayor is doing with war on gangs and on his gang prevention initiative. We need to give gangs alternatives and help them find such alternatives. Some people are not aware of the opportunities in life, so we need to show them. Enforcement – step in and say “no, this will not be allowed.” If they are willing to change, then help them.

**Jerry Duncan:**

It's the reality of Fresno; what I call the "Fresno Factor". We don't have the tax base. The RJI is trying to help by creating more and better jobs. We need City Hall to help make it easier to do business in Fresno.

**Henry T. Perea:**

Public safety is the only function required of charter cities, so it must be the number one priority. Everything else is optional. We need to fund police and fire so they can respond in a timely manner. How do we grow general funds? Believe the business sector creates jobs and the government creates conditions for the businesses. There needs to be funding for quality of life projects.

**Mike Dages:**

Management is top heavy in our police department and has expanded more in the past ten years. We have five deputy chiefs and lots of lieutenants. We need to eliminate upper tier positions and put more money in parks and recreation. As Mayor I can give that direction to staff. Middle management is the problem. Consolidation is part of the answer. There has been a lot of talking about it but as Mayor, I will make it happen or staff will lose their jobs.

**Ashley Swearengin:**

I would encourage you to look at my public safety platform. Our Police Department Expenditures are at around 52% of our general fund. When Fire Department is added, the total is 72% to 74%. This level is appropriate given our still too high levels of unemployment, which ties to the crime rate. Consolidation will bring about some cost efficiencies. There is additional opportunity for efficiency if we increase the number of volunteers performing non-mission critical activities. For example, the Fresno Citizen Corps has trained more than 500 volunteers to assist with disaster response. In the long term, we need to make gains in the economy if we are to reduce the percent of our budget going to public safety.

**Jeff Eben:**

It is appropriate. I wish we could spend more. Our priority has to be to protect our citizens. We need to let Fresno citizens sleep well at night. Intervention and prevention are critical and are just as important as suppression. The State needs a tax reform – more money needs to come to municipalities for public safety.

**QUESTION # 3: *Budgets at all levels of government, including city government, are going to be under severe stress in the foreseeable future. If you were mayor today, what steps would you be taking to address this issue?***

**Henry Monreal:**

I have been a city employee for the past 33 years. I don't want to criticize our leaders, but I have seen waste; programs that can be cut. We need to get rid of the waste. From my position in the Police Association and as a member of the helicopter team and other teams, I have seen things that will help me make decisions in the future. Fresno needs additional funding. The housing market will get better by this summer. Fresno needs to increase its tax base by bringing in responsible business (no pollution and good base jobs). Downtown revitalization will also help our economy.

**Jerry Duncan:**

First, I will incorporate a zero base budget. This has never been done, and we will have a chance to start from ground zero. I believe in marketization of city services – have the City compete with the private sector for delivery of services.

**Henry T. Perea:**

I support consolidation of public safety. We should continue with consolidation of purchasing polices – the City, County and even the school districts should consolidate purchasing to get better deals on purchase of fleets, health care, etc.

**Mike Dages:**

The government has 10 percent too many employees. We have 5 employees per supervisor. We should cut staff by 10%. I would do it by attrition.

**Ashley Swearingin:**

The City of Fresno is in better shape than most cities. Our general fund has grown by 45% since 2002. We're facing a \$20 million deficit next year, but there will be a \$4 million surplus from this year, plus a \$5 million reserve set aside for next year, so the gap is \$11 million. This is a challenge, not a crisis. Of course it will be rocky – first we need to conduct an efficiency study to increase efficiency, which hasn't been done since the Meeting the Challenge report in 2002. Second, we need to look at consolidation of services with other jurisdictions. Third, we need to increase volunteer participation. Fourth, e-government needs to improve. Fifth, we need to make sure fees are in alignment w/costs. Last, if this doesn't work we will need to consider program cutbacks or suspensions. I'm confident that the budget gap will be closed.

**Jeff Eben:**

I have experience in complex budgeting. In good time and bad times it is the same. It must be a principled team process. If you have a set of principles they should be: (1) to be able to provide basic services to people; (2) to continue to invest in the future; and (3) to set aside a little for a rainy day. Having a guide of principles will help though harder times. Fresno will end this year without a deficit.

**QUESTION # 4:** *The issues that affect our residents, among them unemployment, crime, air quality, K-12 drop-out rates and access to health care, are all interconnected, yet many of them are governed by multiple governmental jurisdictions. Can you cite examples of how you have worked across jurisdictions to address complex issues?*

**Henry Monreal:**

I was the Political Action Committee (PAC) Chairman of the Police Association, so I have learned a lot about politics. I have a B.S. in Criminology and am a lifetime student. I am a member of a gospel choir. I was student body president. I know how to bring people together.

**Jerry Duncan:**

I have been working with Supervisor Phil Larson and Al Smith on the issue of public safety consolidation.

**Henry T. Perea:**

I've been working on public safety consolidation. Also, the city and county got together and met on the issue of homelessness. They got the right people in the room and that's what we need to start doing. I co-authored "No Neighborhood Left Behind," which gave me experience in political boundaries. I also worked on the Green City Plan.

**Mike Dages:**

I have met with every County Supervisor. The City and county cannot afford to have two egos working separately. On the topic of health care, Fresno needs to work with the health department and must work together with the county. We need to convince companies to stay here and not take off, like I did in the case of the Ledestri plant, which kept 105 jobs here in Fresno. Fresno needs to use solar on new construction. Fresno needs a solar plant here creating solar panels. It takes two years today to get through the City process if you want to open a new business. If we cut that down to one year, developers might want to use the savings to put in solar systems.

**Ashley Swearingin:**

I encourage you to read my Regional Leadership platform. I was one of the founders of the Fresno Collaborative Regional Initiative, a joint venture between Fresno State and the Fresno Business Council. I am the Chief Operating Officer for the Regional Jobs Initiative. I am the lead executive for the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, that has put in place a ten-year plan that bring together the public and private sector, including NGO's, to address the full complement of challenges facing our region.

**Jeff Eben:**

The question is whether we want to approach things from the top down or the bottom up. We have to start with our children. There is a common threat in education. It can't just all be about the API numbers. As we have de-emphasized vocational education, the arts and athletics, we have left nothing that will keep our youth in school. It is our responsibility to get back down and change the culture and work our way up. Being an educator and

being involved with City Hall, I believe I can bring the two to work together. Cities can help fund joint use facilities schools and support vocational ed as well as arts and athletic programs.

***QUESTION # 4A. Following up on the preceding question, how would you work across jurisdictions to address the issue of concentrated poverty?***

**Henry Monreal:**

I have been involved with many different clubs and know how to bring people together. Fresno County lacks a tax base. People need assistance – if we are willing to help, then we can turn it around. We need to involve the neighborhoods “one block at a time.” There needs to be a private/public partnership.

**Jerry Duncan:**

We need to update the poverty level numbers. “Empowering people” is important. We need to find neighborhoods that want to improve and help them implement their plan. Start with the neighborhoods that want to improve first, then move on. More people will start to have pride in their neighborhood.

**Henry Perea**

Concentrated poverty – there are so many issues that relate. Lack of banking services for low income families. Most low income families rely on pay day lenders. We need to create ownership. Strategies to do such are: 1. create more banking 2. get more people into IDA’s (Individual Development Accounts) for those who want to pay for college, start a new business or buy a new home.

**Mike Dages:**

The answer is to create vocational education. I proposed a city ordinance that would require one apprentice for every five workers.

**Ashley Swearingin:**

The model the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley has used can also be implemented on Fresno’s poverty issue, but with a more concentrated focus on a smaller geography. We need to get all our resources focused on solving the problem of poverty. The RJI is working with the Fresno West Coalition and the City of Fresno to do just that on a project focused on the 93706 zip code area. We are doing something called “asset mapping” -- identifying every asset in the community – to use that as a basis for creating an actionable plan.

***QUESTION # 5: The San Joaquin Valley and the City of Fresno have been neglected by the State and Federal government for decades. What would you do to change this? Can you cite examples of what you have done in this regard in the past?***

**Henry Monreal:**

As the Political Action Committee Chairman for the Police Association, I have spent time in Sacramento. I wouldn't just leave this to a lobbyist. I would go to Sacramento myself and meet with the Senators, Assembly members and the Governor.

**Jerry Duncan:**

I don't believe this is going to change much. I'm a realist. There's not much money available, and what is there is going to be siphoned off by L.A. and the Bay Area. Fresno obviously still needs to be proactive, but we're going to have to generate most of our resources locally. Success comes within the Valley. A great example of our community working together is the "Metro Rural Loop."

**Henry T. Perea:**

We need to look at the issues from a global, regional and local standpoint. I am President of the Latino Caucus, and I have been appointed to serve on the Peace Officers Training Commission. The doors have opened up in Sacramento. When the President of Mexico was here, I was invited by the Governor to participate in a one-on-one meeting to share my views with the President. I am a supporter of surface water storage.

**Mike Dages:**

I cannot cite examples of what I have done because I haven't done anything in the past. Mayor Autry has done a good job, although we are still getting just little trickles. I believe Fresno needs one Public Relations person to "sell" the city. PR professionals (not lobbyists) need to go to Sacramento and D.C. Fresno needs to be proactive and be heard. There need to be more people on staff to write grants. I have asked for them repeatedly, but turned down. As mayor, I would make sure they are there.

**Ashley Swearengin:**

A strong mayor of Fresno must be at the table when resources are being allocated in Sacramento and Washington. Mayor Autry has opened that window. The next Mayor will need to open it wider. Fresno needs to be an advocate directly and through the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley. We are much more successful when we join forces as a region. Examples of that success: \$1 billion for Highway 99; \$650 million for transportation corridor funding; \$5 million for U.C. Merced; \$3.5 million for training of nurses and vocational education. We have just opened up that faucet. There's a lot more available.

**Jeff Eben:**

I am new to this conversation. Mayor Autry has established a strong relationship with Sacramento and Washington. The California Partnership for the san Joaquin Valley has

given us an effective means of having our voice heard. We need to start a San Joaquin Valley Caucus – a voting bloc that is looking out for Valley interests. Have an annual meeting of the caucus and decide on our priorities.

***QUESTION # 6: What are the values you will use to make decisions about our future?***

**Henry Monreal:**

- Treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- Spend time with the City's residents.
- I will do what needs to be done myself, working with a team.
- I will make sure public employees are taken care of and that in turn will make things better for the public.

**Jerry Duncan:**

My values are posted on my web site. In short:

- Freedom works.
- Power comes from the private sector.
- Income growth – comes from economic development not from taxes.
- Give employees an opportunity to innovate.
- I believe in the individual.

**Henry T. Perea:**

I believe in the values I was raised with:

- Integrity and honesty.
- Open mind
- Fresh perspective and experience.

Politics is not for the faint of heart. The key to leadership is going against one's own constituents. It's not easy – one must be able to take arrows and go forward (described an instance in which he opposed a position favored by a union that had endorsed him).

**Mike Dages:**

As my dad said: "Tell the truth; you don't have to remember anything." Decisions must be backed with facts. I don't grandstand. I ran Southeast Fresno by getting things done, not by news conferences. "Practice what you preach." Fresno needs a cabinet, and there needs to be a full-time mayor. I am not "project-driven" – chasing after the last project that got my attention.

**Ashley Swearingin:**

I follow the "Guiding Principles" that are on my web site. My leadership style is collaborative because it's the only way you can accomplish lasting results. This doesn't imply I want "big group hugs". We need to bring diverse groups together and drive to outcomes. For me, community interests will always come first. I am not tethered to any special interests and I am open-minded. We need fiscal discipline – I will always find a way to make progress for Fresno within the constraints of fiscal discipline. Not many

people know this but I wrote the first draft of the Fresno Community Values that have been adopted by many organizations across the City. I live by those values.

**Jeff Eben:**

As I talk to voters, they don't ask me about transit-oriented development or market-tax credits. Everyone says that they want a mayor who is trustworthy and honorable, a good role model who believes in the power of hope. For me, this is an opportunity to serve my community.

**7. This is a three part question:**

- a. When you filed your papers to run for Mayor, did you agree to comply with the California Code of fair Campaign Practices?**
- b. Have you signed pledges from any organizations? If so, which ones?**
- c. Have you completed questionnaires for any organizations? If so, would you be willing to make those completed questionnaires public?**

**Henry Monreal:**

Yes, I did agree to comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I completed a questionnaire from SEIU and would be agreeable to making it public.

**Jerry Duncan:**

Yes, I did agree to comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I have not signed pledges nor completed questionnaires from organizations, but would make them public if I did so.

**Henry T. Perea:**

Yes, I did agree to comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I have not signed any pledges. I did complete some questionnaires from organizations, and am agreeable to make them public.

**Mike Dages:**

Yes, I did comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I have not completed pledges or questionnaires from organizations, but would make them public if I did.

**Ashley Swearingin:**

Yes, I agreed to comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I have not signed pledges. To date, I have completed a questionnaire from the Central Labor Council and am agreeable to making it public.

**Jeff Eben:**

Yes, I agreed to comply with the California Code of Fair Campaign Practices. I completed a questionnaire from the Republican Party and am agreeable to making it public.