

Educationally Speaking  
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### **I guess I want your vote, too**

Many of my close friends and family members know that I have difficulty sleeping for a solid 6-8 hours each night. I've taken prescription medications that have started to impact my sleep patterns and are helping. However, they impact my ability to do everything else in the meantime. My favorite example is my unique ability to coherently converse with people over the phone for an hour or more. That means people don't even realize I'm not retaining any of the information they're telling me. I only know I spoke with them because of my phone log. On the flip side, my productivity went way up. I've paid bills and even done homework in my sleep – rather well, too. It's great turning in a project and telling the professor, "I don't know where my inspiration came from. I was asleep when I wrote this."

Thankfully, I'm slowly weaning my way off the sleep medication, which means I can now have dreams again. Before, I could never remember my dreams and now I can. Last week I dreamt I ran for mayor of Salem and I won the election – beating Opie Cooper by a landslide. Now, before I continue on let me state that what I'm about to reflect on is strictly from my dream and I am in no way condoning or fully supporting any of the actions I took as Salem's pretend mayor. I have no real experience or knowledge of Salem's operating costs or budget information outside of what is published on the city website. Although, the future mayor may feel free to use my ideas...

As the newly elected mayor of Salem my first act of business was supporting city beautification matching grants. A pretty city is an attractive city – seriously. No one wants to stop in a city or build a business in a city that looks like a scene out of an episode of *Sanford and Son*. I proposed grants to areas of the city like downtown, the north side, etc. that raised money to improve the area with new paint, lawn care, flower gardens, gates and cleaner streets.

My next act of businesses as mayor was to establish a system of perpetual public notice by heavily utilizing the newspapers and city website at [www.cityofsalemin.com](http://www.cityofsalemin.com) by webcasting all city meetings and urging the Salem school board to do the same. People can only be truly informed about decisions and understand why those decisions were made if they're in the loop. Now citizens can be informed while sitting at home in their underwear.

Next up on the agenda: survey public interests and learn what sucks. I can give you a great example (outside my dream) by using the technique of the Town of Fishers, Indiana. A few months ago the town calculated results from a survey of over 7,000 town residents, myself included. Two issues on citizen's minds were chronic traffic congestion and poor efforts to remove snow from town streets. In response, Fishers is collaborating

with officials from Indianapolis to create an express shuttle system slated to start later this year. The plan calls for an express shuttle to run between Fishers (among other neighboring areas) directly into downtown Indianapolis. Next, the Town of Fishers put all their efforts in snow removal after a foot of snow fell a few weeks ago. By putting drivers on 12-hour shifts, keeping all trucks on the road and contracting out work the town achieved 77% satisfaction on snow removal – up from just above 40% satisfaction.

Last on the agenda: create economic growth that people actually care about. Building a new spec building in a so-called commerce park doesn't do diddly-squat for the young kid out of work and randomly trolling the streets or the unemployed father and mother of two kids. As a result, Salem needs to position itself to pickup commercial zones but should shoot outside of a lousy Wal-Mart. Stores like Target or Meijer can come to town without destroying local shops because, for example, Target just doesn't sell *absolutely everything* and doesn't try to. Additionally, Salem needs to position itself as a city of administration. Frankly, Salem is not in a position geographically to export *products*, but could easily export *information*. Clerical, business analytics and financial job skills can be granted by schools near Salem like IU, Ivy Tech and UofL (or IUPUI), and those jobs don't require the city to be located near three merging interstate highways.

Alas, I'm not *really* running for mayor, although, you could always vote for me as a write-in candidate. I could run the city on Thursday evenings after class. Plus, I still go to my doctor in Salem and as long as the sleep medication is there I can keep having ideas to manage the city.