



Candidate Questionnaire Responses

The West Coast Chamber serves as an advocate for business at the local, state, and federal level for our 1,200+ member organizations and nearly 80,000 member employees. Our commitment is to educate our members on important policy issues, provide access to our elected officials, and serve as an advocate for a business-friendly environment.

In an effort to educate our community and prepare residents to cast their ballot in the upcoming election, we created and shared a brief questionnaire with all candidates running for office to better understand their stance on business related issues. All candidates were contacted and given two weeks to respond to the questionnaire. Responses from those who completed the questionnaire are reflected below.





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 CANDIDATES

Jim Barry

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have lived most of my life in Ottawa County. I have worked in real estate, development, investments, contract law, finance, communications, and I have board experience. I'm a licensed Associate Broker with 10 years of real estate experience. Previously I was a financial advisor for 20 years and held the Accredited Asset Management Specialist designation. I was also a long serving member of the Herrick District Library Board where I was board treasurer. I have served as my church treasurer and am currently chair of our endowment board.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

1. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners needs to reassure business and the entire community that stable, competent, responsible leadership is in place to provide essential county services.
2. Workforce development remains a problem in Ottawa County. I'm very interested in the new on-site day care that is in development at manufacturing locations for Gentex and Shape. I think initiatives like that can bring people back into the work force and improve employee retention. The development at Shape is being helped with ARPA funds but there may be other ways the county can help facilitate this in the future.
3. Affordable housing will be a long-term issue we will all need to work on. As a Realtor, I know firsthand how hard it is for first time home buyers to take that first step to acquiring wealth. It's to everyone's benefit to have affordable housing that is accessible to schools, shopping, and jobs. Fixing this will require co-operation between all levels of government along with public private partnerships. County government certainly has a role to play in the solution.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

Right now, I think there is general concern about governance issues in Ottawa County. As I am out in the community, I find people may not know all the specifics, but they are aware of lawsuits and the fact their county government is in the news in a way it never had been before. I think new leaders committed to fiscal responsibility, transparency, and principles of good governance are the most impactful things we can do to create positive growth in our community.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

electjimbarry.com





Danielle Smith

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have an undergraduate degree in Political Science, graduate degree in Human Resources, and 25 years of business leadership experience, 5 of which are as the top-level human resources executive. I have a proven track record of collaborating with others across multiple points of view to reach consensus and managing multi-million-dollar global budgets and teams successfully. Finally, I've been an active member of the Holland/West Michigan community for over 15 years, participating in various non-profits and professional boards.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

As an executive human resources business leader in West Michigan, much of my time and energy has been focused on attracting and retaining needed talent. The top three issues consistently cited by our local labor force are: 1) workforce barriers such as lack of affordable housing and childcare, 2) perception that West Michigan isn't an inclusive community and 3) growing contention within our county government that is gaining negative national press.

When elected, I will advocate for taking the 'politics' and culture wars out of county business. I will use data and input from my constituents, relevant community and business stakeholder groups, and county data/benchmarking to inform my decision making.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I believe the County Commission must support a robust economic development strategy if we want to continue to be a great place to live and work. As a current leader in an economic development organization, I see firsthand the positive impact this type of investment has on innovation, job creation, talent attraction, as well as land and building reuse. If elected, my goal is to continue working creatively across business, government, and my constituents to ensure we support business development by addressing workforce barriers such as access to affordable housing, access to effective and low cost health services, and lack of childcare and transportation infrastructure that could negatively impact our ability to attract and retain the talent needed to support continued business growth in West Michigan. It is imperative that we create an environment where our local businesses can thrive.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

electdaniellesmith.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 CANDIDATES

Jordan Jorritsma

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

The top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan are worker/talent shortages, childcare, and a changing regulatory landscape.

When it comes to worker/talent shortages, I believe we have tremendous opportunities to grow Ottawa County in a conservative and measured way while not eroding our shared values. This should involve a strategic housing plan to provide more available homes for young families and workers.

Next is childcare. Solving childcare issues makes life more affordable for people in the area but also helps combat the worker shortage as it allows more stay-at-home moms the option to go back to work. The price of childcare is extraordinarily high, often costing families north of \$20,000 per year. It's also scarce. We can look at creative programs that currently exist throughout the state and start conversations with companies to try and make a dent in that issue.

Another large issue is over regulation. Since 2022 there have been concerning trends in the regulatory environment, especially at the state level including the repeal of Right to Work. There is also a terrifying court case that could institute a \$15 minimum wage which would crush small businesses and restaurants almost overnight. We as a county can work with our business partners to ease regulations that exist at our level, and advocate on their behalf for our state and federal partners.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

The role of any public servant is two-fold. A public servant must be an administrator, but also a voice of the people. I believe that when you neglect one in favor of the other, you don't serve effectively. I see tremendous opportunities in Ottawa County to grow and bring in great jobs, improve our parks, infrastructure, and make life better for our citizens. But there is a right way to accomplish that and a wrong way. Ottawa county grew 14% between 2010 and 2022. We could double that number, but it would likely have to involve altering the fabric of our community in ways that our community doesn't want. Instead, we should focus on prioritizing growth that aligns with the vision of our people. As an elected official, I will engage with the community to understand that vision and work to implement it.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

jordanjorritsma.com





Christian Kleinjans

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

With the exception of my military service, I've spent my entire life in Ottawa County. Thirty of those years have been in my district, District 2, raising my family and taking part in helping this community become the vibrant place it is today. My decades of work in local nonprofits have taken me across the county, meeting and engaging with people at every level and walk of life and giving me an understanding of the concerns people have countywide, not just in the 2nd. We remain a diverse and fast-growing county, and our residents have both regional and local concerns that are important to them. I've worked collaboratively with various groups and organizations from Coopersville to Jamestown to Holland to Grand Haven, and through that work I've gained an awareness about how concerns about housing, employment, our environment, and the health of the community can vary by region.

I also have the benefit of service on both the Advisory Board of Ottawa Food and the Board of Community Mental Health of Ottawa County prior to becoming a commissioner. Both of these positions informed and educated me about the factors that help or hinder the success of some of our residents, as well as about the many programs and agencies spread across the county that are there to help.

Through all of these encounters, whether through work, my service to the community, or talking to my neighbors, I have learned much about the threads that bind us together as a community.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

Mental Health: The recent Community Health Needs assessment revealed that for the first time, mental health is the number one health concern countywide. No one is immune to being affected by this, and the health of our county's industry and businesses depends on the health of its employees. A healthy worker is a better employee. Support and adequate funding for both the DPH and CMH, along with allowing them to pursue grants that address this issue, will help bring resources in and destigmatize the idea of getting help.

Housing: This has been a need for some time. People who live closer to where they work are also our consumers and might become business owners themselves. The current lack of housing stock inflates home prices and rent, financially squeezing people at every level. We need to have a countywide conversation about this outside of the scope of the Housing Authority with an eye toward developing a plan that will create the housing stock we need in a mindful manner.

Space: Residents have indicated they like three things about our county: adequate employment, respect for our ag heritage, and plentiful greenspaces. When factoring in housing, we have to admit that our growth is fueled by the space available. That's not finite, and we need to start talking at the county level now about what we want the county to look like in 2050 so every municipality feels heard.





If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

District 2 is an energetic district, diverse by every metric. It is representative of the conversations about where the rest of the county and the nation are heading. Right now, we need a mix of voices at the table. I would never agree to the county government mandating what a city, township or municipality can do, but county government can lead discussion and ideation because it has the resources to facilitate this complex task. At the county level there are a lot of resources, talent, connections and historical knowledge that can help townships and organizations plan for a future based on what their community and neighbors feel is important vs. what the region needs to build on the work that's already been done. I see the position of county commissioner as someone who can help facilitate and brainstorm with our district neighbors to bring about each individual's definition of success.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

kleinjansforcountycommissioner.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 3 CANDIDATES

Doug Zylstra

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

As County Commissioner for the past five years, I feel I have been a responsive and transparent voice for the residents of the City of Holland to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

I am running for re-election to continue to be a positive presence on the board and ensure that Ottawa County government continues to address the diverse needs that affect our community.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

- Housing - Expanding Housing opportunities here in Holland and throughout Ottawa County. I worked to reestablish the Housing Commission and to fund the \$10M Ottawa County Housing fund
- Health - Ensuring that the County continues investing in the physical and mental health of Ottawa and Holland residents. I worked to make sure that our current leadership was not removed from their position in 2023-24, which I believed was key to maintaining a strong public health presence here in Ottawa County. I also opposed the \$2M in Public Health cuts in the FY 24 budget.
- Cost of Government - Ensuring that we're spending county tax dollars responsibly, and then communicating that openly and transparently. I opposed a variety of what I felt were wasteful decisions taken in 2023, especially around firing our County Administrator (twice) and contracting overly expensive legal services.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

zylstraforcountycommissioner.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 CANDIDATES

Chris Crothers

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have experience in leadership and operations of a local business. I have education and experience in process writing and problem solving. I bring experience from the working class that is under-represented in these elected positions. I also have had the privilege of connecting with a diverse cross-section of Ottawa County constituents in a real way through the breweries over the past 5 years. I have perspective and I am not narrow minded. I have lived my entire life here and I know our community. Finally, I am not a politician. I have no political ambitions beyond this point.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

I would say that the biggest issues facing businesses in WM today have nothing to do with county politics. Things like taxes and regulations are not set by the Board of Commissioners. I do think that the county has some opportunities to continue building infrastructure that will lead to a healthier economy. Things like pushing for more affordable housing initiatives so that we can house the workforce needed for our manufacturing industries would be incredibly helpful. In addition to housing, working to expand our public transportation systems will also bring in more talented employees to our area. A very obvious project for the county would be bringing back the DEI resources for local industries to utilize, as it was the local companies that requested these services in the first place.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

crothersforcommissioner.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 6 CANDIDATES

Michelle Dieleman

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

Over 35 years ago, I opened my own salon, and I have been self-employed ever since. I have sat on nonprofit boards for over 25 years at both the local and State level. I served as a chairperson at various times, including during a period of organizational upheaval.

Being a small business owner is a challenging and rewarding experience. I have learned how to both have boundaries and provide excellent customer service. Holding various nonprofit board positions has taught me how to work in cooperation with my fellow board members. It has also given me experience with following Robert's Rules of Order, adhering to the Open Meetings Act, and writing policy and procedure.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

The top issues currently facing businesses are employee attraction and retention. Employees and job seekers list affordable housing, childcare care, and transportation as the biggest barriers to employment. The combined effects of rising costs and relatively stagnant wages make this a more challenging housing market than any previous generation has faced. First-time homebuyers, renters, and older adults are struggling to find homes. Solving these issues will require innovative solutions and all of us working together.

Likewise, transportation and childcare costs have continued to rise, making it hard for people to get and maintain jobs. We need to increase the number of transportation options available throughout Ottawa County. We also need creative solutions to lower the cost of childcare, while ensuring adequate wages for childcare workers. I will work to address these issues so that our community continues to be a place where anyone can live, work, and play.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

michelle4commissioner.com





Shawn Haff

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

My qualifications and experience uniquely position me to effectively represent our district. With a degree in political science and a minor in history, I have a deep understanding of the political landscape and the historical context that shapes our society. Additionally, my background as a lawyer equips me with critical thinking skills, analytical prowess, and a commitment to upholding the law.

Furthermore, my conservative values are rooted in principles of individual liberty, limited government, and fiscal responsibility. These values resonate with many in our district, and I am dedicated to championing policies that uphold these principles.

Through my education, professional background, and commitment to conservative values, voters can have confidence that I will advocate vigorously for our district's interests, uphold our conservative values, and work tirelessly to enact positive change.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

In Ottawa County, the three main issues facing businesses are:

Workforce Development -- One of the foremost challenges facing businesses in West Michigan is the need for a skilled workforce. To address this, the county should continue to promote vocational training, apprenticeships, and partnerships between local businesses and educational institutions. By investing in programs that equip individuals with the skills needed for in-demand jobs, we can ensure an outstanding workforce pipeline that meets the demands of county businesses.

Infrastructure Investment -- Infrastructure plays a vital role in facilitating business growth and attracting investment. Addressing issues such as road maintenance, broadband access, and transportation infrastructure is essential for enhancing connectivity and enabling businesses to operate efficiently. I will advocate for infrastructure investment to the best of my abilities as a Commissioner.

Regulatory Reform -- Excessive regulations can stifle business growth and innovation. Streamlining regulatory processes, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and fostering a business-friendly environment are essential to keep Ottawa County a great place for business. If I find any regulations that are not necessary in our county, I will do what I can within my powers eliminate them.

As a Commissioner, I am committed to working collaboratively with members of the business community to address these issues and advance policies that support our region's economy.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

shawnhaff4commissioner.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 7 CANDIDATES

Heather Majestic

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I hold a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Business Administration from Michigan State University. I am a veteran and served for six years as a supply corps officer in the Navy. Through my education and military service, I learned the processes and procedures that help organizations operate efficiently and effectively.

I worked for 17 years at Steelcase in procurement. Since 2020, I have worked at Corewell Health, first as a data and analytics manager and now as a strategic sourcing manager. These roles have given me experience with large organizational budgets and strategic planning. I am also a widow and single mother. Each of these experiences made me a disciplined and patient servant-leader.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

The top three issues facing the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners at the moment are restoring stability, transparency, and respect for the people who live, work, and play here. Typically, these would not be the top issues facing businesses; however, the lack of predictability and inhospitable environment that has dominated the past 18 months, has greatly damaged our reputation and would prove extremely detrimental to our local businesses if it were allowed to continue another four years.

I will work to ensure good governance and fiscal responsibility. I hope to instill trust in our local government again. I will respect and represent everyone in our county - not just the people who look or think like me. When there are differences of opinion, I will work to find compromises that meet as many needs as possible.





John Teeples

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have been an attorney for 38 years and owned my own law firm business for over 20 years. I am fiscally conservative, and I have lots of litigation experience (including as a civil-court mediator); and I am experienced in municipal affairs. For example, I represented the City of Hudsonville for over 20 years and had approximately 300 business clients and several school districts as clients, including Jenison, Hudsonville, West Olive and Grandville public schools. I have also held numerous public and non-profit leadership roles in West Michigan. Maybe, as importantly, I have a respected reputation for integrity, trust and for common sense problem solving and decision-making. I work well with others. Further as an elected official, we are responsible for representing everyone in our community respectfully and as fairly minded as possible regardless of their political affiliations, opinions or lifestyle, etc.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

1. Attracting and Keeping Talent in WM.

How to address?

Providing a "welcoming" community with a robust community environment. Inform new and prospective talent of the many services, programs, and activities offered in their community. Keeping our schools strong and distinguished provides a huge incentive to attract and keep talent. Continue to support and promote our Parks and Recreation programming- an unparalleled opportunity for all. Embrace a culture "Where You Belong."

2. Labor Shortages.

How to address?

Address affordable housing. Many jobs are available, but workers can't afford to live in the community because of unaffordable housing costs, and as a result are burdened with transportation and childcare costs. This pressing issue must be prioritized to aid our citizenry, as well as our business owners.

3. Uncertainty of the Economy & Inflation

How to address?

Our property taxes have gone up 5% (the maximum allowed by state law) for the past two years (2023-2024). This is the first time since 1994 that this amount of increase has occurred. It is more important than ever to make prudent fiscal decisions and stay out of unnecessary lawsuits and to stop making imprudent and inexperienced decisions resulting in wasteful spending of tax-payer dollars. We must strive to keep our taxes as low as possible and not waste our financial resources.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

johnteeples.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES

Becky Patrick

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I care enough about Ottawa County and its residents to have had a deep involvement in county government since January of 2023. I've attended more than 70 county commission or committee meetings. I've founded, or led, together with others, four different grassroots groups dedicated to restoring good governance to Ottawa County. I started a newsletter to explain commission activities to county residents and helped get it distributed to more than 5,000 people every couple of weeks.

My second qualification is that I have a deep understanding of government and leadership, including the role and the limits of government.

I was the Regional Director for the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality. In that role, I worked closely with businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to develop consensus on new regulations and policies.

Prior to that, I developed and led a selective Leadership Academy for emerging leaders in the Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality and Natural Resources. In that role, I helped the students learn the importance of collaboration and stakeholder involvement and practice it in assigned projects.

I also have a track record of service. I have served on a number of community and faith-based boards, including as an officer on the Lansing Christian School Board, an elected position.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

The needs of businesses and the needs of residents overlap in many ways. I would be interested in exploring many solutions to these mutual needs. However, if I had to choose just 3, I would choose the following:

Our housing situation in West Michigan is likely at the top of the list for businesses. If employees cannot find and afford housing, it affects the ability of business to cultivate a quality workforce. If elected, I would rejuvenate the Ottawa County Housing Commission by placing people on it who have expertise and a demonstrated interest in developing affordable housing. The Housing Commission has met only sporadically since 2023.

Workforce development also requires an environment in which employees from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and desire to live and work here. Ottawa County was working hard on being that place until 2023. If elected, I would seek the input of employers and other stakeholders as to how best to rebuild Ottawa County's reputation as a place where all belong and bring those action items before the Board of Commissioners for approval.





Of particular concern to Allendale Township is access to groundwater/drinking water. Our dwindling groundwater supply is affecting development of every type and affecting businesses and residents who currently rely on groundwater for their water supply. The Groundwater Board has also only met sporadically since 2023. I would rejuvenate this board as with the Housing Commission and seek to develop a range of options to make drinking water available and development possible.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

patrick4ottawa.com





COMISSIONER DISTRICT 9 CANDIDATES

Philip Kuyers

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

Was a commissioner before and chair of the board for 3 years
Served as President of Michigan Associations of Counties and on the board of National Association of Counties
Served on Ottawa County Farm Bureau board and as President Dairy Farmer for 40 years and built and owner of Pigeon Creek Golf course.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

Lack of employees - Making west Michigan an inviting place to live and raise a family
Affordable housing- Continue to use the housing programs that the state and federal has in place already and tax incentives in the communities.
Quality childcare -Working with businesses to continue to have inhouse childcare.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

electphilkuyers.com





COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 10 CANDIDATES

Josh Brugger

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

Experience is important. Even more than a flawed political ideology, Ottawa Impact Commissioners lack of experience and understanding of the role of a County Commissioner has done incredible damage to our County.

I've been fortunate to have been raised in a family where commitment to my community and service to others are highly valued.

Here's a list of a few of the things I've done:

Ottawa County Economic Development Corporation; 2020 to present – (Chairperson)
Ottawa County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, 2020 to present - (Chairperson)
City of Grand Haven, City Council, 2015 to 2019 – Elected
City of Grand Haven, Planning Commission; 2011 to 2015
City of Grand Haven, Zoning Board of Appeals; 2007 to 2011
City of Grand Haven, Human Relations Commission; 1994 & 1995 – (Student Liaison)

I've also had the awesome opportunity to work with the following organizations:

Lakeshore Habitat for Humanity & Tri-Cities Habitat for Humanity – After completing a two year commitment to AmeriCorps, I joined Habitat for Humanity in Holland, and later was the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity in Grand Haven.

Love INC – Assisted with the opening and operations of the Love INC thrift store in Spring Lake.

The Salvation Army – Volunteered as an Advisory Board member for 12 years, two years as Chairperson.

Lastly, I'm an entrepreneur, local business owner, employer, and member of the Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce. The best part of any month is a ribbon cutting ceremony for the opening of a new business.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

There's only one issue and the "trickle down affect" of that issue. The issue is the divisive, ideologically flawed, and wholly inexperienced leadership of Ottawa Impact Commissioners.

Once voted out, we can get back to the business of serving members of the community, helping businesses grow, partnering with the for profit and nonprofit sectors, and in short, rebuilding the "business" of Ottawa County.





In the first 100 days, I look forward to working collaboratively with my fellow commissioners as we undertake a state wide, and if necessary, nationwide search for a competent and qualified County Administrator; one who will be hired based on their experience and actual qualifications for the job, not their adherence to a political ideology.

The exact same thing will need to be done when it comes to replacing the County's legal representation. Between five lawsuits, poorly run meetings, untimely and incorrect legal advice to staff and volunteers, and what amounts to "on the job training" experiences, it's time to hire a law firm that actually knows and understands municipal/county law.

While there are more than just three issues facing the County, I'll add that rebuilding staff and rebuilding moral among County staff ranks high on my list of priorities. "I have a political agenda and so I'm going to go work for the Ottawa County Sheriff's, Health, Clerks, Treasure's, or Prosecutors Office, said no one ever!" We need to let our staff know that they are valued, respected, and appreciated.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

It doesn't "sell newspapers", but we need to get back to providing boring, reliable, and predictable services to all facets of our community.

Like stock markets, a surprising jolt to the system, followed by mismanagement, incompetence, and the case of Ottawa Impact Commissioners, "revenge politics, will lead to poor performance, lost confidence, and eventually, a market collapse.

We need to get back to a board of Commissioners who knows that the job they've been hired to do is to transparently, collaboratively, and with utmost attention paid to fiscal responsibility, manage the resources of the County to meet the needs of the county; all needs of the county, not just those that align with one's political ideology.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

brugger4commissioner.com





Jason Koert

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

With over 10 years owning a service company, years of flipping houses, being director of many different programs and working for large companies and small has helped me obtain many skills to represent the district effectively. Working with countless people in my district directly and hearing their concerns as well as their hopes for our county has kept my ear to the ground and a broad perspective of the needs of the area. Being truthful and transparent is something I hope to convey to the voters.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

First is mass inflation. I see it directly in my business and how it affects spending, investing and getting quotes. The high cost to purchase or have any services provided is damaging to small businesses. This problem is an issue that is not solved completely at a county level but at a federal level with a reduction in government overspending and devaluation of our US currency. The county can play a role in reducing local cost and focusing on marketing our amazing area to draw in more entities.

Second is the willing labor availability. I have spoken to many small business owners and managers, and they struggle to find willing people to fill needed positions. When they do find people, they struggle to keep them or have them fulfill the needs of the position. Fixing this issue is not an overnight project and will need strategic alignment with schools, tech programs and colleges to help align and promote employment opportunities that may turn into careers.

Third is transportation costs for goods and to do service work. Having local transportation vendors working closely with our production companies may help make shipping more efficient and environmentally friendly in working together with multiple companies to ship cohesively.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I truly hope the community we have here in Ottawa county embraces my communication style of open dialogue and really listening to everyone in any position, social economic status or stance on any issue. I want to help anyone I can have a fighting chance for the pursuit of happiness in this growing county.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

jasonkoert.com





Oliver Shampine

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I am currently studying Public Administration and Sociology at Grand Valley State University. With my experiences working as a representative at the state capitol and for the city managers of Grand Haven, I have gained valuable insights into the political process, especially the importance of engaging in open dialogue. These roles have also taught me the significance of fiscal responsibility and proper governance of local affairs.

I am committed to engaging with everyone and representing their perspectives, even when we disagree. My leadership approach is grounded in integrity, transparency, and collaboration, aiming to build a stronger Ottawa County for our families.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

1. **Workforce Development:** Many businesses are struggling to retain experienced employees. I will work to build partnerships between local businesses, educational institutions, and other training programs. I will advocate for opportunities that provide areas for growth and improvement.
2. **Infrastructure:** Adequate infrastructure is essential for business success. I will work to improve transportation networks, including safe roads and accessible public transit, to ensure consumers and employees can commute and reach local businesses.
3. **Fair Housing:** A lack of affordable housing affects employees' ability to live near their workplaces, impacting businesses' ability to attract local talent and maintain a high quality of life for their employees. I will fight for affordable mixed-income housing options, support fairer zoning practices, and work with developers to create housing solutions that meet our local needs.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I see the role of county commissioner as crucial in fostering sustainable growth in Ottawa County. By creating an environment that makes it easier to establish a business and ensuring everyone feels welcome, we can continue to be the fastest-growing county in the state. I will use this position to advocate for the needs of businesses and other constituents, focusing on greater housing options, improved transportation, and rethinking zoning laws.

Our community is beautiful, with wondrous parks and pristine beaches, making us a prime destination. I will use my position to connect our communities, enabling us to grow and prosper sustainably.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

olivershampine.com





Douglas VanBenekom

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have a bachelor's degree in history and criminal justice. I am a member of a union and have work at a local business. This gives me an understanding of what most of the people in the district have go through every day. The commission is most made by business owners, so it is important to have other perspectives that can enhance the commission.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

One issue that I think is facing businesses in West Michigan is rising housing costs. This makes it harder to hire more people or to expand businesses. I think the commission should work with local governments to make building more homes easier. Another major issue is the need for more investment in infrastructure in the county. I would work with the county to apply for more grants for funding for infrastructure projects. A third issue facing businesses is the negative impact of the county commission's actions on the reputation of the county. If elected I would argue for the county commission to act more professionally and to be aware of how their actions reflect on the county's reputation.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I think that I can work with the County government and private businesses to find ways to improve growth. We need a county government that is focused on collaboration, rather than enforcing its will on people. In order for businesses to invest in the county they need trust the county government will follow the rules, which the current commission does not.





COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 11 CANDIDATES

Sara Bajema

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have spent 20 years working in corporate banking and commercial real estate. I bring experience in business development, management, financial advising, and sales consulting. My true passion lies in empowering small businesses to achieve their full potential. I help guide businesses through challenges and opportunities, including securing capital, optimizing budgets, implementing affordable payment solutions, and developing effective sales strategies. Throughout my career, I've collaborated with a wide range of clients, fostered strong relationships and with owners and leaders that have helped find solutions to make their business grow.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

Housing: we need affordable housing in Ottawa County. I believe new homeownership along with financial education play big factors in this. There are programs available to help new homeowners, as well as programs targeted at educating the public on financial basics. I think that if we could partner with local companies to bring awareness to these programs would help.

Ground water aquifers: I would ask what can we do to expand the number of homes that can hook up to city water? Where can we build new housing that will hook up to city water vs having to drill new wells. Looking at master plans and finding a way to still allow for growth but also not hurting our current groundwater issue.

Transportation: This is an especially large issue in District 11, we do not have public transportation. I think if we could find a way to partner with Grand Rapids or Muskegon to create a transportation route that would connect us to the larger cities would allow for lower income people to commute. This would benefit not only those living here, but those commuting here to work.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I think that focusing on ways we can help to foster programs, services and community partnerships that will grow Ottawa County. I know firsthand how having supportive programs, transparent policies and peaceful collaboration will allow for positive growth that will benefit everyone in our county.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

electsarabajema.com





Richard Van Dop

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

6 yrs. Kenowa Hills school board, 3 as President. I led three churches as a pastor. I served 26 years in the Navy, serving in a number of leadership positions at the unit level, regional level and national level. I retired as a Captain. I have lived in Ottawa County for over 20 years. I have a B.A in Political Science and a Master of Divinity.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

Poor hires wasted taxpayer money, and generally bad leadership. I want to see open discussions in board sessions, all hiring done openly and competitively, all board members and citizens respected and treated fairly, adherence to published agenda with amendments done openly, and adherence to a reasonable budget.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

Fostering an environment where people want to do business in Ottawa County, where they want to live and work here. Encouraging fledgling businesses through incubators. Helping agriculture preserve the water table levels. Getting the Board to operate in such a way that people begin to trust again and take pride in Ottawa County.





PROSECUTING ATTORNEY CANDIDATES

Sarah Matwiejczyk

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I am a career prosecutor with 23 years serving as a prosecutor in Ottawa County, currently as its' chief assistant. I have extensive experience and proven trial skills working in all areas of prosecution, including district, circuit, and family courts, as well as in the administration of the office and staff. I am a former law school adjunct professor at WMU Cooley Law School teaching trial skills, am an educator for the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and teach at GVSU's police Academy. I graduated from Michigan State University, James Madison College majoring in political theory and constitutional democracy with a minor in social relations. I obtained my law degree from Michigan State University and graduated cum laude.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

1. Recruiting long-term quality candidates. As Prosecutor, I will ensure to all citizens that Ottawa County is a safe community to live and work.
2. Crime within the business such as embezzlement or shoplifting, employees with drug or alcohol issues. I am a firm but fair prosecutor who will protect businesses that are victims of crime to ensure justice and restitution.
3. Safety within the workforce. I am experienced in handling the prosecution of employees or customers who threaten the safety of others.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

I have the experience, integrity, and dedication to all of the citizens of Ottawa County to ensure that, if I am elected Prosecutor, our community will remain a safe haven to raise our families and to work. I am a dedicated public servant to the people of Ottawa county and victims of crime. My husband and I have chosen to raise our four children here, and Ottawa County is a place we love.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

sarahmforprosecutor.com





Greg Todd

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

With over 17 years of experience as a litigation attorney, I have honed my legal expertise across various fields. This tenure has not only deepened my understanding of the law but has also equipped me with a wealth of courtroom experience and a mastery of the Michigan Rules of Evidence. From meticulous case preparation to adept witness examination and compelling oral advocacy, I have cultivated skills essential to being an effective prosecutor. Moreover, my background in the private sector uniquely positions me to bring fresh perspectives and innovative problem-solving approaches to the prosecutor's office.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

First, crime and public safety are paramount. Businesses need a safe environment to operate effectively. I will prioritize law enforcement efforts to combat crime, focusing on reducing theft, vandalism, and other criminal activities that negatively impact businesses. By working closely with local law enforcement agencies, we can implement strategies that enhance security and build community trust.

Furthermore, I will advocate for community policing and partnerships between businesses and law enforcement to create a safer, more cooperative environment. By addressing these issues head-on, we can create a thriving business climate in Ottawa County, fostering economic growth and prosperity for all.

Second, workforce shortages are a pressing concern. Many businesses struggle to find skilled labor, impacting their ability to expand and thrive. To address this, local business owners need to collaborate with educational institutions and vocational training centers to promote programs that align with market needs. By supporting initiatives that enhance skills development and job readiness, we can ensure businesses have access to a capable and adaptable workforce.

Third, regulatory burdens pose a significant issue. Excessive and complex regulations can stifle business growth and innovation. I will encourage community leaders to streamline regulatory processes and reduce unnecessary red tape, advocating for policies that support a business-friendly environment while ensuring necessary protections remain in place.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

A safe community is essential for attracting and retaining businesses, residents, and tourists. I'll focus on reducing crime rates through effective law enforcement and crime prevention strategies. By targeting serious offenses and repeat offenders, we can create a safer environment that encourages investment and economic growth.

Ensuring justice for victims and providing necessary support fosters a sense of security and trust in the judicial system. This trust is crucial for community cohesion and participation in civic activities. I'll work to enhance victim support services and improve communication between the prosecutor's office and the community.





A fair and efficient legal system is critical for maintaining public confidence and ensuring that justice is served promptly. I'll implement policies to reduce case backlogs, streamline prosecutorial processes, and ensure that all individuals are treated equitably under the law. By promoting fairness, we can improve public trust and cooperation with law enforcement and judicial institutions.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

gregtodd.com





COUNTY SHERIFF CANDIDATES

Jon Anderson

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

32 years in law enforcement, which includes 15 years in leadership positions and chief of police roles, command-level experience in a large sheriff's department, private executive/management level experience, college instructor, and I am currently the Interim County Administrator of Ottawa County.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

- 1 - recruiting and retention. Leadership skills and relationship building will ensure we can attract and retain good people.
- 2 - working within budgets. Experience in dealing with budgets and constant assessments and/or reorganization are paramount to ensure we keep funding needs low.
- 3 - affordable housing for employees. By working within my budget, I can keep property taxes low, which in return means lower rent prices.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

By creating relationships that build trust. This starts from the top - every member of the sheriff's department should be a reflection of their communities and be invested in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in their communities.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

joneanderson.com





Eric DeBoer

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I believe that the combination of my experience, my education and my connection to Ottawa County make me uniquely qualified for the Office of Sheriff.

I have worked for 25 years in numerous units within the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office. I have time in the marine patrol, road patrol, community policing, undercover investigations, the detective bureau, supervision and administration within the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office. This has given me a comprehensive understanding of the department and its strengths and challenges.

I have an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, and a Master of Public Administration. This has helped to improve my communications and critical thinking and has given me the tools to evaluate and improve programs and systems within the department.

And as I noted before, I have been a part of this community for the last 25 years. I have been invested in making this county and its numerous communities safe. I have lived in Ottawa County for a quarter century, I attend church in Ottawa County, I have served as a firefighter and on a local planning commission within Ottawa County, and my wife, Hillary, and I are raising our two children in Ottawa County. I have a vested interest in keeping Ottawa County one of the safest communities in the state.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

While I do not tout myself as a business expert, three issues that could be affected by a sheriff are recruitment, cybersecurity, and stability.

When attempting to attract talented professionals to skill positions, a police force in the area that will treat everyone well and fairly is a must. If someone does not feel that they belong or will be treated unfairly they will not come or will leave for other areas. I am committed to retaining the long-standing values of the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office.

The growing trend of phishing schemes and DOS attacks has been an issue both within West Michigan and nationally. My experience in fraud investigations and the relationships I have formed with local federal resources allow me to help protect or help remediate any businesses that are victims of such events.

Finally, business thrives in a stable environment, and more importantly flees from instability. My refusal to be involved in controversial politics and my commitment to remain a stable figure within the law enforcement and political area will help ensure that business has a place to come to and thrive.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

A community with stable law enforcement is key to attracting and retaining businesses and a talented workforce. With my years of service in Ottawa County along with not being involved in divisive politics, I believe that I will allow anyone looking to move or expand





their business into Ottawa County to feel confident that their investment is safe and will be well served by the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

votefordeboer.com





COUNTY TREASURER CANDIDATES

Cheryl Clark

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I have over 32 years of Treasurer's Office experience (Ottawa County Treasurer since January 2024, over 15 years as Ottawa County Chief Deputy Treasurer, 8 years in other roles in the Ottawa County Treasurer's Office, and 9 years as Robinson Township Treasurer). Worked alongside 4 different Ottawa County Treasurers, learning valuable lessons. Overseen the management of the Ottawa County's \$200 million plus portfolio by following the Ottawa County Investment Policy and Public Act 20; selecting institutions, brokers, and investments that meet the requirements; Establishing procedures to control risk and diversify investments; keeping portfolio sufficiently liquid to meet operating, capital expenditure, and debt needs; maximizing the county's return on surplus funds. Assisted Ottawa County residents in keeping their property from going into tax foreclosure. Processing and managing multiple budgets for the Ottawa County Treasurer's Office. Written Deposit and Investment notes to the annual financial statements for Ottawa County. Assisted in writing the Ottawa County Investment Policy. Successful audits for both Ottawa County Treasurer and Robinson Township. High performance Leadership Master Certificate, Advanced Certified Public Funds Manager Certificate, County Treasurer Government Basics Certificate, Michigan Municipal Treasurer's Institute graduate, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, hands on experience with fund accounting, extensive knowledge of the statutory requirements of the county treasurer's role and the delinquent tax process. Member of the following Ottawa County boards/commissions/authorities: Elections Commission, Plat Board, Tax Allocation Board, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Insurance Authority, Building Authority, and Chair of the Land Bank Authority.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

- 1) Finding and retaining employees
- 2) Affordable housing for their employees
- 3) Access to broadband

I will help to address these issues through my role as Ottawa County Treasurer on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. I will encourage developers to utilize the financial tools that the authority can offer them, including Tax Increment Financing which may create affordable housing. Employees will want to continue to work in West Michigan if they can find affordable housing here. In my role as Treasurer, I can also continue to invest the county funds following the law and investment policy and maximize the county's return on surplus funds. By doing this the county will continue to have additional funds to help with the cost of expanding broadband.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

Through my role as the Ottawa County Treasurer, I am on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. This authority facilitates rehabilitation, revitalization, and reuse of environmentally contaminated, blighted, or functionally obsolete properties by offering





financial tools to help developers offset costs incurred for environmental assessment, demolition, lead or asbestos abatement, and other activities. The authority also offers Tax Increment financing to developers so they may build affordable housing.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

votecherylclark.com





Ben Genser

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

As a proven wealth management professional, I provide comprehensive financial planning, asset management, and investment advisory services to families and businesses across West Michigan. With a Bachelor's and Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Michigan combined with 18 years of private sector leadership experience across financial services, management consulting, and advisory, I believe now is the right time to use my distinct skill set to help our county.

Leadership, communication, critical thinking, and negotiation are skills I bring to the table alongside a proven track record in strategic planning, project management, process improvement, tax planning, and audit. I also serve on two Ottawa County boards, the West Michigan Planning Commission (WMPC) and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDs). As one of Michigan's fastest growing counties, I believe it is necessary to bring a combination of private sector experience and public service to the office of the Treasurer to fortify financial resilience and expand economic opportunity.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

As one of Michigan's fastest growing counties, we must consider how population growth will affect land use planning, infrastructure needs, workforce development, government services, housing, and economic opportunity. County government is an important sponsor of local economic development initiatives, and it must involve a collaborative process between public, private, and non-governmental sectors to stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities. Although local government does play a key role in development initiatives, it is also important to consider the limited role of government and how that limited role should support a free market economy through deregulation, reduced taxation, and the protection of individual liberties. While we must work to attract new business investment and promote tax policy that incentivizes economic development, it is equally important that we respect the historic identity of Ottawa County by promoting the right type of economic growth for the right reason at the right time. In this way, we ensure our local economy continues to attract hard working talented people who aim to be active members of society and wish to realize the American Dream. It is my opinion that the treasurer's office has an intrinsic responsibility to provide strategic support to the master planning efforts of our individual municipalities. For too long there has been a disconnect which has left many communities at a disadvantage. Opening channels of communication and building last relationships with city and township leadership will better serve the general economic development needs of our residents.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

As your Treasurer, I will lead through a conservative lens upholding Fiscal Responsibility, Integrity & Transparency, Individuals Liberties, Free Market Economics, Limited Government, and Property Rights as key tenets of strong conservative leadership. As the county's chief banker, it is imperative a strategic and tactical approach to managing the





county's balance sheet is taken to fortify financial resilience and expand economic opportunity. For many, their family home will be the largest investment made throughout their lifetime. I pledge to protect property rights and work diligently to reduce foreclosure rates by enhancing and improving access to financial literacy tools. We must collaborate with community stakeholders to remove barriers preventing sustainable business models and promote an entrepreneurial philosophy to add a protective layer from economic uncertainty. As Treasurer, I will work to ensure the residents of Ottawa County have every opportunity to realize the American dream with economic security and financial freedom.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

bengenser.com





WATER RESOURCES COMMISSIONER CANDIDATES

Joe Bush

What qualifications and experience do you have that will give voters confidence in your ability to represent the district effectively?

I currently hold the position of Water Resources Commissioner and have held it for the last 12 years. Over these years, I am a person that works extremely hard on the relationships that have been built amongst so many community members, whether that be business owners, developers, or constituents. I am a person that is available to my county residents. I am very knowledgeable on drain code, so therefore, I can come to the table with options and ideas that will be the best for our county's waterways, while still thinking about the families who live in our great county.

I am also certified through the state in Storm Water Management and Soil Erosion. Using my prior experience working in the engineering department at the Road Commission has given me the ability to come up with solutions for our community.

In your opinion what are the top three issues facing businesses in West Michigan, and how will you help to address these issues?

In my opinion, one of the top issues that face many businesses in West Michigan is that many are facing staffing challenges. It is becoming more and more difficult to maintain a talented workforce.

Another issue is rising costs of inflation and the affordability of doing business.

The third issue is the affordability of benefits including healthcare.

As the current Water Resources Commissioner, I strive to limit outsourcing, when applicable, and because of the great businesses in West Michigan, many times, I can refer products/talent to local agencies.

I continue to work with the business owners/developers in new developments in order to bring more availability to the public with having new businesses come to our area. We are still a choice destination.

Over the past 12 years, I have been a partner with West Coast Chamber and Lakeshore Advantage to promote local businesses.

If elected, how do you see your position being most impactful in creating positive growth in our community/state?

As I seek reelection, it is imperative that I maintain the close working relationships that I have built with Ottawa County residents including local farmers, community business owners, and developers. The laws of drain code are of the utmost importance as I navigate new developments and seek to help the residents of Ottawa County. My relationships with local government, the Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and the Ottawa County's Conservation district have allowed those individuals and myself to work together in a manner that shows the value of relationships that have grown over the 12 years in this office. All of these close working relationships assist in creating a positive community for our residents.

Please provide a link to your website so voters can learn more about you.

votejoebush.com

