

**Citizens for a Fair Ferndale
Library Board Candidates Forum
Sunday, October 23, 2011
3:00 p.m. (arrive by 2:30)
Ferndale Public Library**

Library Board Candidates Questionnaire

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1. Why of all Boards and Commissions, are you so committed to the Library Board?

My wife and I have used libraries since we were children, and when we moved to Ferndale we and our children made regular visits to the Ferndale Library. We attended the visioning sessions for the renovation and enlarged library conducted by the architects and when construction got underway I joined the Library Building Committee. In the summer of 2009, I was asked to consider joining the Board to fill a vacant seat. It seemed to me that I had enough experience with the Library to be of value to the Board, so I submitted my name and was appointed.

2. What, in your opinion, have been the 3 most exciting new options for Library patrons since the opening of our new facility?

It's tough to mention only three. The multipurpose meeting rooms are regularly used by a wide variety of groups. The computers are a popular destination, especially for those patrons who don't have their own at home or on the road; the computer lab provides a quiet area for instruction in the internet and a place where users can have their questions answered by the Library staff. The third new option has to be the children's room. This department provides reading, computer games and skills, crafts, story hours and presentations; it is away from the adult areas but supervised and secure – and it has a wonderful view of the courtyard.

3. What are the next 2 pressing issues for the Library?

Money and technology are the two pressing challenges for the Library. Declining property tax revenue means that we will have to raise funds to renew and add to our collection of materials. And the rapid changes and trends in information technology will mean that the Library must continuously reconsider the ways it serves the public.

4. Tax revenues are down, and money from all sources is tighter than ever. Are there any services now given or any new services that should be “re-visited” due to needed belt-tightening?

The Board and staff have worked together to avoid cuts in service by careful budgeting and working cooperatively with the City, which also faces a challenging financial situation. Information technology has allowed the Library to access more information and opinion than ever before without the constant expense of buying and updating reference material and subscribing to large numbers of newspapers and magazines. Computers and internet connections are a substantial upfront expense, but they provide patrons and staff with a far cheaper access to current news, opinions, facts and entertainment than print material did.

5. How can we get more people to use our Library?

The Library staff regularly asks patrons what they want from the Library, and Board members listen to what people have to say about the Library. Two groups that have traditionally been hard to entice into the Library are teenagers and the “twentysomethings”, a group of young adults, from 18 to well beyond 29. Staff members work with each group to discover ways the Library can entertain and educate them to help them accomplish their goals: currently there are events scheduled around Teen Read Week in mid October, and First Stop Fridays features bands that appeal to the twentysomethings. The Library’s website also has links to blogs, attractions and events of interest to all ages of Library users.

6. Information retrieval, literacy, reading for pleasure are all important and growing more important daily, no matter if you use traditional books, or new technologies such as iPhones/ iPods/ Kindles. What implications does this have for the future of Ferndale Library?

The Library will soon buy several e-books and tablets for the staff to use on the job and to sign out for personal use. The aim is to find out how useful these devices can be when working with the public, and to determine how patrons could use them.

7. With whom do you envision the Library collaborating closer? Where do you see the need for more communication between the Library and other groups in our community?

I’m sure the Library will collaborate more closely with the City, just as other public libraries and cities will, when it comes to advocating for municipal government in Lansing. The Library already plays host to a regular town meeting with Ferndale’s state representative. There is an obvious need for collaboration with Ferndale Public Schools, both during the school day with particular classrooms and after school to help with assigned projects. Because our Director is building relationships with the City and civic groups, and our staff has ties to the community, I’m confident that the Library will communicate and collaborate with many more groups as the need arises.

8. What makes you the best candidate for the Library Board?

I don't think there is such a person as a "best candidate". My wife and I have used and enjoyed libraries since we were children, and after we moved to Ferndale in 1970 we and our children spent a lot of time in the Ferndale Public Library. I volunteered for the Building Committee at its inception, and have been a Library Board member for almost two and a half eventful years. I've enjoyed my association with the Library; no regrets. Like every other Board member, I bring a unique set of experience, knowledge, curiosity and point of view to the Board, and together we discuss, advocate, criticize, question, challenge, and make decisions that help keep the Ferndale Public Library active and vital as we move into a future no one can predict.