

**Citizens for a Fair Ferndale
Library Board Candidates Forum
Sunday, October 30, 2016**

**1:00 – 2:30 pm
Ferndale City Hall**

Library Board Candidates Questionnaire

Name: Kevin Yezbick

Address: 357 Silman

Phone: 248-259-4410

E-mail address: kevinyezbeck@gmail.com

1. Why, of all Boards and Commissions, have you chosen to run for the Library Board?

Libraries have always been an important part of my life. Whether or it was being raised by parents who took us weekly to the Canton Public Library, or spending many late evenings researching for school projects – I have always found them to be a welcome place. When I looked to a career that could put my love for research, technology and desire to give back to the community, I found Librarianship to be my calling. I spent 10 years in the field of public librarianship – as a paraprofessional, an Adult Reference Librarian, and a Young Adult Librarian at the Farmington Community Library. In my own community I spent time serving as both President and Vice-President of the Friends of the Ferndale Library. While making a career move into the private sector, I still have a desire to give back to my community and support the Library. Thus, when a spot opened on the then Ferndale Public Library Board of Trustees, I welcomed the opportunity to be appointed, and helped with the transition to becoming the Ferndale Area District Library. I look to continue to be involved with the goal of having our Library be recognized as one of the Best Small Libraries in America.

2. What are the two most pressing issues for the Ferndale Library at this time?

I believe retaining our devoted staff and maintaining our building and resources within are the most pressing issues for our Library so that we can continue to be provide a safe and welcoming environment for our community and guests.

3. Ferndale voters recently approved a significant increase in library funding. In order (from highest to lowest), what do you think are the highest priorities for using the

increased funding? Why that order? How will you ensure that the funds are well spent?

I believe the top three issues we face are keeping our Library open seven days a week, avoiding brain drain by offering competitive wages to our staff, and maintaining a healthy resource collection – including a robust technology plan, are the top three priorities for our Library.

Based on the survey responses we received, hours of operation were the biggest concern of our patrons. Keeping our library open seven days a week quickly became a focus when we discussed levels of funding.

It isn't enough to have open doors. People have to want to come inside. We often hear from our patrons how helpful and knowledgeable our staff is. Many of our staff members are residents of Ferndale. To keep a familiar and welcoming presence, it is important to keep our valued staff members, who go above and beyond their job responsibilities to keep our guests returning. One of the most impressive services our Library provides can be seen with the amount and variety of programs offered – none of which would be possible without our committed staff. Offering them competitive wages in line with libraries serving similarly sized communities will help retain their talents and avoid the flux that can come with turnover.

Aside from the great service that our staff provides, we need to continue to make sure that we build upon what is unmistakably our brand – books. A well funded collection development budget that provides access to information and entertainment will meet another of the desires expressed by our patrons in survey responses. This access to information comes in many different forms these days – and our technology is currently trending behind the curve. A Technology Plan will ensure timely renewals and improvements on dated equipment.

As a member of the Building and Finance Committee, as well as the acting Treasurer, I have spent the past few years looking at the hard numbers. We've made painful cuts in that time. As a board, we are aligned in our goals to support the Library and make it a point of pride in our community. While there has been a significant increase in funding – the actualized returns are still months away. We are looking into the estimations and making calculations as to what is a sustainable model of spending. Sustainability is the key. Year over year – planning ahead for the future.

4. How can we get more people to use our library?

Visits to our Library have increased exponentially, 400% since 2005. Still – the question is how can we get more people to *use* our library – and a physical visit is not the only way in which one can utilize the resources we offer. Digital services such as OverDrive e-

books, Mango Languages, Zinio magazine subscriptions and research databases offer service 24/7 beyond the borders of our walls. Our staff are also actively venturing beyond our doors as part of our Outreach service to the schools and our senior community. Active promotion and marketing of our Library and resources beyond our walls is key to increasing use. Ensuring those that visit have a positive experience will be rewarded with positive word of mouth marketing.

5. The nature of information and information distribution is changing at a frantic pace. What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the library in this changing environment? What are the biggest threats? How should the library respond to both opportunities and threats?

Providing access to information is a foundation of librarianship. We have the opportunity to provide our patrons with the tools and resources to gain access. There is opportunity for programming to educate on the use of these tools. One of the biggest threats is the misconception that anything is available on the Internet –even while a simple search for a New York Times article you may have read just a short time ago now leads you to a paywall. Subscriptions to research databases will provide access to these news articles as well as scholarly research from around the globe. A well-trained staff engaging with our patrons through programs offering training on these resources will be a benefit to us in responding to both of these opportunities and threats.

6. Do you think libraries can play a role in helping to reduce social inequality? If so, what are the best practical steps for a library to achieve that? If not, how do you see the library's role in society as a whole?

Access to information and entertainment – through training and programming – helps to begin to level the playing field. Pointing people towards resources based on their needs. The Librarian's reference interview acts as a discovery tool towards those needs. It's important that people feel welcome and comfortable discussing their questions, which depends on a well-trained staff. Making the benefit of the availability of these resources prominent is also imperative. Displays, promotional materials, and Library programs all play a part as well as partnerships in the community. The resources should be current, and a well-funded collection development budget coupled with a professional librarian will ensure these resources are available to our patrons.

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

We have so many active partnerships currently – it is one of the great parts of being a Ferndale resident. We are still building and strengthening our relationship with the schools. I hope for stronger partnerships with our senior community. I am proud of the Outreach we have done given our limitations in recent years and am excited to rejuvenate our efforts and form stronger bonds in the future.

8. What makes you a good candidate for the Library Board?

As stated before, I have over decade of service towards Public Librarianship as experience. I am passionate about the Library as a third place away from home and work, as a pillar in the community, an anchor institution. I am an advocate for social justice and believe the Library is one of the greatest strengths and products of our Democratic Institution. I want to give back to my community and libraries, which have both been very kind to me, and I think this is the best place for me to employ my strengths and passions towards that end.