

**CFF Candidate Questionnaire
Mayor and City Council Candidates
November 2019 Election
(4-year Term)**

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Please provide responses to the following prompts:

- **Describe your community involvement.**

I have been involved with the Ferndale community since 1999, when I moved from Texas to Michigan to attend the University of Detroit Mercy. However, my most recent involvement has been at AFFIRMATIONS (AFF), the largest LGBTQ+ Community Center in Michigan, an anchor institution for Ferndale, and an asset for the region. The below describes my work and deep involvement as a Board Member (on a volunteer basis). It will show my passion, ability to leverage my finance/strategy knowledge for long term positive outcomes, and most importantly being able to step into a leadership role during challenging times.

I joined the AFF Board of Directors in 2017, with the simple intent to provide financial and professional support. Soon after joining, I was invited to support the Executive Committee as the Vice-President based on my ability to identify improvement opportunities and create consensus among the Board. After the departure of the previous President, and the unexpected departure of the newly elected President, I was asked to lead the Board of Directors as the Interim-President. My tenure as Interim-President was focused on creating stability and recruiting talented individuals to support organizational gaps. We were successful in recreating 5 new diverse Board Members with expertise in audits, finance, talent acquisition, event planning, and strategy development.

In 2018, I was elected Board President, which I accepted, with the purpose of leveraging the new Board talent to understand the long term sustainability of the organization. Through a series of discovery sessions, it was determined the organization had been operating with a budget shortfall subsidized by a depleting reserve. Due to this, in November 2018, under my strong recommendation the Board decided to announce major changes to avoid closure, and ensure critical community services were provided. I lead the Board and the organization through a restructure, and a transition period. In addition, a robust communication plan was developed to keep the community informed. The plan

involved monthly community chats, increase financial transparency, and broadcasted Board meetings.

In 2019, I was re-elected Board President, which I accepted to provide continuity as AFF entered a new phase financial stability and new leadership. In the last 9 months, the organization has recruited a new Executive Director from the Los Angeles LGBTQ+ Community Center, recruited additional Board Members (with expertise in communications and development), increased staff, significantly improved cash flow, and a positive operating net income is projected this year. With this level of stability, the organization is welcoming a re-engaged community under expanded operating hours and services. Due to these major milestones achieved, I was recognized by Crain's Detroit 40-Under-40 in September 2019.

Again, the above illustrate my deep involvement in supporting/leading an important non-profit and anchor institution in the City of Ferndale.

- **Why did you decide to run for City Council/Mayor? What has prepared you to hold a City Council/Mayor seat?**

I am running for Ferndale City Council to elevate the neighborhood voice to Council.

After leading a successful 2019 petition on Withington Street to study and implement a traffic "slow-down" strategy, I learned that many residents felt frustrated and unheard by local government. Further inquiries revealed the sentiment was not only felt on Withington Street, but throughout the City of Ferndale in varying degrees.

My inquiries led people to inquire about me. People urged me to consider local politics after learning about my professional background, and my leadership in the Affirmations' turn around. With thoughtful deliberation, and discussions with family/friends, I decided to run for Ferndale City Council in 2019.

The imposter syndrome caused me to question if it was the right time for me. The community disagreed, and cited some of the qualifications they feel I have that will benefit City Council:

- Financial Acumen
- Leadership and Managerial Skills
- Consensus Building
- Strategy Development and Execution

Based on the positive community feedback, I feel I am prepared to serve the City of Ferndale.

- **What is the most productive relationship between Council and the City Manager?**

The most productive relationship between Council and the City Manager is one of deep professional respect. If both equally important roles are able to function in a professional

environment, then Council is able to set a clear strategy that the City Manager is able to execute. In a strong professional environment, the feedback loop is an important tool to identify gaps in capital, human resources, and additional support that may be required by either Council or the City Manager. However, if the professional environment does not exist, Council is unable to develop a strong strategy, the City Manager is unable to successfully execute, and there is no opportunity for constructive feedback to identify gap/improvements.

- **When there is disagreement on any issue among members of the City Council what is the responsibility of each individual Council member?**

The responsibility of each Council Member is to always benchmark any issue and decision to the City's Vision, Mission, and guiding principles (Inspired, Integrity, Inclusiveness, Innovative). This will ensure the Council is always being guided with the community's best interest in mind, and not unchecked biases. If there is a direct conflict between the issue/decision and the Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, then 1) the issue/decision should be rejected or 2) the Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles need to be reevaluated. This methodology ensures a consistent tool for Council to evaluate issues/decisions.

- **What role do Boards and Commissions play in Ferndale's Government? How should members be recruited/screened?**

Board and Commissions serve an important role for the city and the community. They serve to provide guidance and recommendations to the City Council and City Manager within the parameters outlined by the Vision and Mission. The Boards and Commissions allow for additional community contact to address questions and concerns. This level of interaction allows for additional clarification and feedback prior to making a recommendation to council.

The Boards and Commissions allow for community members to be involved and provide their perspective as recommendations are generated. Based on the important interaction of the Boards and Commissions with the community and Council, appointments are critical. Appointments should be consistent, with 3 goals in mind:

- 1) Recruiting subject matter experts to provide professional advice and guidance
- 2) Recruiting community members with diverse voices to provide a community perspective
- 3) Recruiting active members representing local groups, clubs, and forums to help explain/advocate and reduce public misinformation.

- **How will you work to promote inclusion of populations that might feel excluded in this community?**

One of the most effective ways to promote inclusion is to have diverse populations represented in leadership roles. However, representation is not enough.

As an individual who navigates several points of intersectionality (Latino, LGBTQ+, First Generation American, ect), I may have a unique perspective on inclusion. I believe another effective way to engage excluded populations is to reduce barriers. Reducing barriers may help groups feel they are interfacing on a fair footing, which contributes to a more engagement and productive dialogue.

I would actively work to identify barriers and collaboratively work to reduce and eliminate them.

- **Describe the type of development that you see as most beneficial to Ferndale.**

The growth and development for the city must be fair, balanced, and inclusive. Growth and development is inevitable for a sustainable community. However, the strategy should be to attract growth, while maintaining the fabric of our neighborhoods and the essence of what makes Ferndale uniquely Ferndale.

Growth and Development must be assessed by:

Fairness – Was the development selected in a methodical and consistent manner that eliminated bias?

Balance – Is the development consistent with current neighborhood character and expectations?

Inclusiveness – Does the development have a narrow or wide target? Does it include, meet, or exceed housing affordability mandates? Does the development support day or night activities?

If the parameters around fair, balanced, and inclusive are defined, then applied consistently, the appropriate type of development will be selected to benefit the City of Ferndale.

- **What specific ideas do you have for reducing expenditures while maintaining city services?**

One model to address rising cost is to leverage purchasing power.

I would recommend to start with low risk and expendable expenses (paper, pencils, pens, ect). This approach works best when you purchase in volume. The recommendation would be as follows:

- Collaborate with neighboring cities to participate in a volume purchase agreement.
- Estimate yearly consumption to negotiate best price.

- Enter into a multi-year exclusive agreement, allowing for more negotiation power, and requesting yearly cost reductions.
- Once pricing is established, each city is able to procure independently against the negotiated master contract.

If this model shows success, then it can be expanded to less expendable and more value add expenses like capital equipment and 3rd party services.

These models address the cost, and help preserve the services we expect from the city.

- **Describe one program you would champion to help foster community.**

As previously shared, I have a unique perspective due to identifying as an individual that navigates several points of intersectionality (Latino, LGBTQ+, First Generation American, ect). I will work extremely hard to reduce barriers and ensure all community voices feel comfortable enough to engage. The first goal in this initiative would be to identify barriers and start addressing them.

- **Where do you see Ferndale in five years?**

In 5 years, the City of Ferndale will continue to strive to accomplish its vision: The benchmark for a modern community that embraces the richness of diversity and brings inclusive hospitality to life.

As our world evolves, the City's vision will continue to be relevant and a vision we as a community will aspire to. I strongly believe the City of Ferndale will continue to be a community that welcomes all, accepts to address the most difficult challenges, and respects the uniqueness of our community/neighborhoods.