

**CFF Candidate Questionnaire
Mayor and City Council Candidates
November 2019 Election**

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Please provide responses to the following prompts:

- 1) **Describe your community involvement:** My community involvement so far has largely been fighting for resident and neighbor issues before our City Council; I'm not a political insider, just a resident who is passionate about the issues that affect our city and its residents. I also attend counter-protests and help spread information on causes that are important to me, like Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation and Human Rights Issues. Additionally, I believe being a good neighbor is a very important part of community involvement – I support our local businesses and do my best to help our neighbors out whenever possible with problems big or small. Kindness is contagious!
- 2) **Why did you decide to run for City Council? What has prepared you to hold a City Council seat?**
My decision to run for council was fueled by the desire to ignite the positive change our residents want to see on the Council level. Residents are fed up with the backdoor politics and Council rubber-stamping Big Development projects that run over schedule, are unaffordable to our residents, and give very little back to our community. Residents are finding out about problematic deals in the eleventh hour. There are no true independent voices on the current Council, and votes are almost always unanimous. They only allow people into their circle when they are people who share their viewpoints and will provide little or no resistance. The people are ready for a change and I'm running to help us achieve it!
As for what has prepared me to hold a council seat, I am currently a Senior Project Manager for a company that designs customer experiences through technology, and I have held several managerial positions over the years. My listening skills are a huge asset, and I plan to use them to vote directly in accordance with the will of the citizens of Ferndale instead of employing a "Council knows best" attitude. I will be a mouthpiece for the residents of Ferndale.
- 3) **What is the most productive relationship between City Council and the City Manager?** The most productive relationship would be one where the City Manager is efficient, knowledgeable, and willing to put in the time and work with our Council members. Thankfully, we have that currently with our City Manager, Joseph Gacioch, and I look forward to working with him to keep our city great and to ensure we are working for the people and not special interests.
- 4) **When there is a disagreement on any issue among members of the City Council what is the responsibility of each individual Council member?** I welcome productive disagreement – conflict is an important means of arriving at the best possible solution! With our current Council, we don't see this often, and we should be seeing it more. There need to be many differing voices on the Council to present alternative views; five people who agree 99% of the time makes any hope for

progress impossible! In instances where there is a disagreement, each individual Council member is responsible for listening to the other side, focusing on ideas, not people, and remaining open to the other Council members' unique ideas and views. Ultimately, working together to arrive at the best solution will help all of Ferndale, and a Council with a varied array of viewpoints would be a huge asset to our city.

- 5) **What role do Boards and Commissions play in Ferndale's Government? How should members be recruited/screened?** Boards and Commissions are important because they allow residents who are passionate about their community and the specific scope of that Board/Commission to be part of the process and offer unique viewpoints and expertise. It's important that members are first and foremost passionate about the specific Board/Commission and also about their city overall. Seeing the makeup of our current Boards and Commissions, I feel the everyday resident is underrepresented and should be utilized more. I see many vacancies that could use filling, and there's no excuse for empty seats. I feel the City's current website is effective in presenting our current openings, and I would like to see prospective members screened by an impartial appointment board. Should that board rule to not go with the candidate, I would also potentially like to see an option to gain entry to the Board/Commission by way of public petition - this would eliminate any political malfeasance or shady moves to maintain power. If the public believes the candidate is viable, the public should have the ultimate say.
- 6) **How will you work to promote inclusion of populations that might feel excluded in this community?** I will promote inclusion by being diligent in reaching out to groups that feel excluded and listening to their goals and concerns to ensure that their voices are truly heard. I will encourage them to be a more visible part of our community from within our various boards and commissions, and to make their principles and ideas heard on a larger stage. Visibility is everything. I'm committed to continuous improvement – it takes time, patience, and perseverance to see positive change. Diversity work is a journey, not a destination, and diversity is one of the things that makes Ferndale such a fabulous place.
- 7) **Describe the type of development that you see as most beneficial to Ferndale.** The types of development I feel are most beneficial to Ferndale is development that gives back to the community - development like the new skate park which has been effective at providing a place for residents to be active while also allowing for all different types of people to meet, coexist, and learn from each other. Also, development that residents are BEGGING for would be of utmost benefit – projects that provide solutions to major problems such as the train or traffic come to mind. If the people are asking for it, the idea deserves to be entertained! Development that is not beneficial to our city – Big Development that our current Council has been providing an open door to these last few years – would be seriously curbed and challenged if I win a seat in November.
- 8) **What specific ideas do you have for reducing expenditures while maintaining city services?** The services in Ferndale are a mixed bag – some are great, others not so much. For example, I think pretty much everyone can agree that our garbage and recycling guys are rock stars! On the contrary, snow removal (at least in my neighborhood) and road crews leave a bit to be desired. I would like to see the city evaluating our service providers and asking residents for their feedback to determine whether to seek alternative options or renegotiate rates for subpar work. For as much as we pay in taxes, we deserve to have the best possible providers servicing our city. Considering no-brainer options like the recent choice to change the streetlights to LED that will save our city over a million dollars over the next decade puts more money back into the city's coffers to be

reinvested in other places that could use that capital. Additionally, voting to allow recreational Marijuana businesses in town (Ferndale residents voted 83.7% in favor of Prop 1), will make us eligible for the 10% excise tax which will provide even more revenue to work with. More common-sense solutions like these need to be employed by our city.

- 9) **Describe one program you would champion to help foster community.** Many residents I speak to are passionate about the Kulick Center. I would like to see it improved on and more invested in. I previously lived in New York City, and their Parks and Rec Department was incredibly effective in providing rec centers that offered a multitude of services and activities for its residents; our Center and its offerings deserve to be beefed up! Events, leagues, and truly unique offerings would all be welcome additions to the lineup currently available. When we free up funds by re-evaluating our service providers and invest in common sense money-saving options, we are then able to reinvest that money into the Center. Community is fostered with a Center that touts a robust list of offerings.
- 10) **Where do you see Ferndale in five years?** Five years from now I hope Ferndale is as funky as ever. I want Ferndale to maintain its unique identity and not take a back seat to Big Development and companies. I hope in five years our Council is populated by a diverse group of people with differing views and opinions, and that those Council members champion the ideas and opinions of the residents that they were appointed to represent. I would love to see lower taxes in town. I would like to see housing be more affordable. I'd like to see more common-sense money saving solutions on a city level. Most importantly, five years from now, I hope our city is packed full of the same amazing residents who make our city so great. I'm fighting to make all of this a reality and hope you join me in the Fall in sending a message to the City that enough is enough. You know how they have voted these past few years and actions speak louder than words. See through the rhetoric and empty promises. It's someone else's turn and it's time we had a Council that works for EVERYONE.