

2023

# Voter Guide



## ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED

The content of this Guide is derived from candidates' profiles and ballot proposals posted online at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org).

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) contains information about many races across the country, with content published as it was submitted by candidates. **VOTE411** allows voters to compare candidate responses to questions, as well as offering information on voter registration, ID requirements, and election processes such as absentee voting.

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By Your Local League of Women Voters

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See [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org) for other local ballot proposals

See [www.kalamazoocounty.com](http://www.kalamazoocounty.com) for a complete list of candidates and proposals

# 2023 General Election Voter Guide

## Non-partisan Information about Kalamazoo, Parchment & Portage City Elections November 7, 2023

**This Voter Guide** was prepared by the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area as a service to the voters. The League of Women Voters is a national non-partisan organization which encourages active and informed citizen participation in government. The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. The League does support issues after careful study without regard to the stand of any party. League positions on issues are never indicated in Voter Guides.

**JOIN US!** Use our Voter Services, study issues, become a member.

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This Guide is available online at: [www.lwvka.org](http://www.lwvka.org) and [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)  
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# Vote Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Polls Open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

## Who May Vote?

In order to vote in Michigan, you must be registered with the Department of State. To register you must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years old by election day, a resident of the city or township where you register for at least 30 days, and not serving a sentence in jail or prison. Registration is permanent as long as the resident continues to live in the city or township where registered.

Due to passage of a 2018 statewide ballot proposal, a citizen may register to vote, up to and on election day, and is automatically registered to vote when applying for, renewing or updating a driver's license or state-issued personal identification card, unless the person declines.

**Check the Michigan Voter Information Center - MVIC - ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote))** or contact your local clerk for details about how and where to register.

## How Do You Vote?

**The procedure involves these steps:**

1. Complete an application to vote.
2. An election inspector checks your name against the computerized list of registered voters for the precinct.
3. Show photo identification or sign an affidavit stating that you're eligible to vote.
4. Vote by using a pen to darken the oval to the right of the candidate's name or Yes / No in the case of a proposal.
5. Tabulate the ballot by inserting it into the optical scanner.

You may receive assistance when voting from anyone except an employer, union, or their representatives. Election officials may assist you, in which case two inspectors (one from each major political party), will give assistance. Instructions in using voting equipment are available online at the Michigan Voter Information Center ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)).

## About Voter Identification

A provision of Michigan election law **requires voters to either present picture identification or sign an affidavit if they do not have picture identification with them.**

The following are acceptable forms of photo identification (ID), assuming they are current and a picture is provided:

- Michigan driver's license or personal ID
- Non-Michigan driver's license or personal ID
- Federal or state government-issued ID
- U.S. passport
- Military ID
- Student ID —high school or accredited institution of higher education
- Tribal ID card

**A Kalamazoo County ID Card is NOT acceptable. If the voter does not have an acceptable photo ID in his or her possession when offering to vote, that voter may sign an affidavit attesting that he or she is not in possession of a photo ID. A voter who completes an affidavit will be allowed to vote a regular ballot.**

## Write-in Candidates

To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the name of that person in the blank space provided for that office and darken the oval.

Votes for write-in candidates are counted only for persons who have declared their intent, at the appropriate jurisdiction, to be write-in candidates by 4 p.m. on the second Friday preceding the election—October 27. Names of write-in candidates will be available after that date on the Michigan Voter Information Center website ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)).

## Are You Registered & Who's on Your Ballot?

The Voter Information Center on the Michigan Secretary of State website allows voters to confirm their registration status, obtain information on the location of their polling place, view a sample ballot and obtain other election-related information. Go to [www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote). Enter your name, birth month and year, and zip code.

## For Students

The State of Michigan allows students to register to vote at a permanent address (a parent's address, for example) or at a school address. It is important to know that the address on your voter registration must match the address on your driver's license. Registering to vote will change the address found on your driver's license, if you register at a different address. Likewise, if you change the address on your driver's license, the address of your voter registration will be changed to match. **You can vote only in the precinct where you are registered**, so take that into consideration when you complete a voter registration form or renew your license. Students who choose to register at their parents' address may request an absentee ballot to be sent to their campus address—and not have to change the address on their driver's license.

### Acknowledgment

Contributors to the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area Education Fund and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation generously provided financial support for LWV voter services, including this Voter Guide.

## Absent Voter Ballots

With passage of a 2018 ballot proposal, all eligible and registered Michigan voters may request an absent voter ballot without providing a reason.

### How do I receive the ballot?

You can:

1. Call your city or township clerk and ask that an application be mailed to you. Complete the application, including your signature, and mail it, scan and email it, or deliver it in person to the clerk.
2. Download an application from the Michigan Voter Information Center - MVIC - ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote)), then complete and return it as for option 1.
3. Apply online at MVIC. You will need to submit information from your driver's license, as well as the last four digits of your social security number. Your digital signature kept on file for your driver's license or state ID must match the signature on your ballot when you return it.

Requests to have an absent voter ballot mailed to you must be received by your clerk no later than 5 p.m. the Friday before the election. If you are already registered at your current address, you can pick up an absent voter ballot in person at your clerk's office anytime up to 4 p.m. on the day prior to the election. If you are registering to vote or updating your address by appearing at your clerk's office on election day, you can request an absent voter ballot at the same time you register.

Once your request is received by the local clerk, your signature on the request will be checked against your voter registration record before a ballot is issued. Ballots are available 45 days before the election and requests for absent voter ballots are processed immediately.

### When must absent voter ballots be returned to the clerk?

At the time of publishing this Guide, the deadline for returning ballots to the clerk's office is 8 p.m. on election day.

The League of Women Voters recommends that you use a ballot drop box or deliver your ballot to the clerk's office in person. If you use the postal service to deliver your ballot, place it in the mail no later than October 24 to allow adequate time.

Your ballot will not be counted unless your signature is on the return envelope and matches your signature on file.

There are instructions included with the ballot regarding who is eligible to return a ballot on behalf of a voter. For further information, contact your city or township clerk.

### Did my ballot arrive?

Registered voters can track their ballots by looking up their information on the MVIC website. ([www.michigan.gov/vote](http://www.michigan.gov/vote))

## Editors' Note

The League of Women Voters (LWV) contacted candidates for biographical information and answers to questions on issues. Those known to have filed a declaration of intent to be write-in candidates at the time of printing this Voter Guide were included. Responses were limited to a specific number of characters and were truncated after the limit was reached. Responses were printed as submitted; spelling, punctuation and grammar were not changed. If the candidate did not reply by the required date for publication, the words "Did not respond in time for publication" appear under the candidate's name.

The order of parties in the Voter Guide is the same as their order on the ballot, which is determined by Michigan Election Law. Non-partisan candidates are in alphabetical order.

The LWV of the Kalamazoo Area provided information about local candidates. The LWV of Michigan provided information about state candidates, and the LWV of the U.S. about national candidates.

Publication of these candidate statements and opinions is solely in the interest of public service. No one should construe this service as a League endorsement in any way. The League of Women Voters takes no responsibility for any of the views or facts stated by the candidates.

## About the Candidates' Responses

Responses were limited to a specific number of characters, including letters and spaces. They were truncated after the limit was reached.

Responses are printed as submitted by the candidate. Spelling, punctuation and grammar were not changed.

If the candidate did not reply by the required date for publication, the words "Did not respond in time for publication" appear under the candidate's name. Check [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org) for submissions after the publication deadline.

# Kalamazoo City Mayor & Commission

## Questions

1. What skills or talents would you bring to the Kalamazoo City Commission if you are elected? Give an example of how you've used one or more of them and describe why are they especially important at this time in the history of the City.
2. What are the two major issues confronting the City in the next two years? How do you propose to address them?
3. What policies and programs will you promote to enhance citizen involvement in the wellbeing of our community?
4. Do you believe that public safety services are currently adequate in the City? If not, how do you propose to improve them? If they are adequate, describe why you think so.

## Kalamazoo City Mayor

### Two-year term—Vote for one

Description: The Mayor is a member of the Commission with the same duties as other members and serves as the representative of the City.

#### John Allen

Age 75. Senior Counsel, Varnum LLP. University of Michigan, LS&A (1969). UM Law (1972). 50 Years Kalamazoo Resident. 50 Years Law Practice. Campaign Phone: 269-491-0056. Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/658279429228620](https://www.facebook.com/groups/658279429228620).

1. The Grace of God, belief in a Higher Power. Wonderful parents (teacher & cop) taught values of faith, truth, integrity, hard work, and civil debate. My Children, the light of my life. Family, friends, their support. Excellent Teachers/Mentors who taught to explore and to question. Military training/service taught discipline, sacrifice, good leadership, and teamwork. Professional colleagues smarter than me. Sports and recreation reflecting all the above. An example is my 50 years of law practice, experience that is very valuable in all City matters, especially Streets & Sidewalks, and the need for better Transparency and Accountability.
2. Streets & Sidewalks affect all our citizens. Must Obey Complete Streets Policy and Manual disclosing the mandated raw Metrics Data. Sidewalks are highest priority for new capital improvements and accommodate both bikes and pedestrians. Better safety, more room for Motorists. The adverse Environmental Effects of Streets Projects (especially on Air and Water) must be studied, not ignored. Diversity of perspective and view. The City needs active participation that is Pro-Motorist, Pro-Police, and Pro-Business. Need Permit Streamlining and a Business Ombudsman to advocate for the applicant. Restrict Administrator Discretion.
3. See them all at FaceBook "Allen for Mayor" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/658279429228620> Sidewalks first, Streets later. Give priority to those neighborhoods that want the new Street Designs. Present Streets Projects violate the Streets Policy and Manual. "Vision Zero" is Weasel Word for an approach that should not be used in Streets- not in Policy or Manual. Many more Meetings with citizens must occur before any Street Project is designed or started. Stop most all the Streets Projects until the raw Metrics Data fully disclosed for each Project. Reprioritize to first complete all Sidewalks where not present. Bike Registration need.
4. Considering their present inadequate resources and personnel, our police and firefighters do a good job. But they and we need more. Too many citizens are not safe, especially downtown. Mall Surveillance Cameras should be installed. And public urination and defecation must be stopped. The Public must feel Safe in the Downtown, or they will not go there. Police and Firefighters need more money. They face limited resources, limited resources, recruitment challenges, and poor morale. Reprioritize funding to Police and Firefighters, from other spending (like Streets). Decrease response times. Increase jail and mental health space.

#### David Anderson

Age 72. Director, Housing and Facilities, Integrated Services Kalamazoo. Kalamazoo Central. B.B.A., Degree in Accountancy, WMU. 12 years on Kalamazoo City Commission, one-term Vice Mayor, two-term Mayor. Campaign Phone: 269-344-2169. Website: [www.anderson4kzoo.com](http://www.anderson4kzoo.com). Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Anderson4Kzoo](https://www.facebook.com/Anderson4Kzoo). Twitter: Anderson4Kzoo. Instagram: [www.instagram.com/anderson4kzoo](https://www.instagram.com/anderson4kzoo).

1. I believe I have a skillset that can lead to areas of agreement even on challenging topics. For example, I was very involved in an extended, contentious lawsuit when the City of Kalamazoo was being sued by adjacent townships. I spent years building relationships to help support a pathway where disparate viewpoints and issues could be addressed, and those efforts ultimately resulted in a new 40-year contract between the townships and the City of Kalamazoo. In a time of significant political polarization, a practical, temperate, and approachable attitude can go a long way toward building consensus on difficult issues.
2. Gun violence is a major challenge. The City is supporting broad-ranging prevention efforts with non-profit partners and developing community-based, equitable policing practices. We're working with neighborhood groups and citizens who are returning from incarceration to develop comprehensive plans to address fundamental causes of violence. The City also must focus on its core responsibilities, like water infrastructure and removing lead water lines, while also making sure streets are safe and allowing for non-motorized transportation and walkable communities. To attract visitors and residents, our parks need to be well kept and attractive.
3. We are continuing to support the priorities that were identified in the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 initiative, which developed out of the most extensive engagement with the community that has ever occurred in the City. We will begin that process again soon, with an extensive survey called IK2035. As a result of that community input and those ideas, we can support plans developed by neighborhoods, as well as the broader vision of the residents of the City of Kalamazoo.
4. I do feel that public safety services are adequately funded at this time. However, like a lot of municipalities, we have had a real challenge hiring enough public safety officers to fill shifts, which can lead to officer strain and burnout. That's a critical issue when we're trying to provide the best public services we can at any given moment. We are also funding efforts to engage with community outreach and local mental health providers to take advantage of their resources to improve the kind of engagement that can occur in police and resident crisis situations.

## Kalamazoo City Commission

### Four-year term — Vote for up to three

Description: City Commissioners are elected representatives of the citizens of Kalamazoo. The Commission provides leadership and policy direction for the community and all municipal government activities with a focus on the long-term financial stability of the city and identification of community priorities. The Commission consists of seven members, including the Mayor. Commission members are elected to four-year terms staggered every two years.

#### James P. Ayers

Age 41. Diagnostic Physics Administrator and Coordinator. Hope College, BA, Philosophy and Biology. Grand Rapids Community College, AS, Biology. Currently I'm the administrator/coordinator for the diagnostic physics department of a local radiation safety company. Previous to this I was a laboratory technician for the materials testing department of a local engineering firm, and a supervisor/stock manager for a global retail corporation. I also served for two years in Americorps. Campaign Phone: 269-350-3128.

1. A very wise teacher introduced me to the Japanese adage 'Adopt, Adapt, Adept' and it has made all the difference. I've learned the hard way that a fourth 'A' is missing from the list: Apology. The ability to apologize and then improve has been fundamental in overcoming personal and professional challenges. Even at the city level the pace of change now is relentless, and the scale of change is easily overwhelming. I am willing to apologize for an error in judgment, and to change my mind when the situation changes or new information is available. Apologize and change seems the best strategy to combat the sunk-cost fallacy in public policy.
2. Equitable Housing and Efficient Transportation. I propose we address housing by increasing the number of high-density, low-cost housing developments such as the one on Foresman Ave. I propose we address transportation by developing an over-the-road "subway system": a network of 8-12 stations throughout the city connected by rapid shuttle. Interface this network with the Metro Transit. Include infrastructure at stations for food/craft vendor stalls to take advantage of pedestrian traffic. Dream big: move across the City quickly without a car, then grab some dinner and art when you get off the shuttle. Does this solve parking too?
3. I propose we empower Kalamazoo's Neighborhood Associations (NA's). NA's are the vital administrative link between us, the residents, and the City government. It's estimated we need ~8K more housing units by 2030. We need strong NA oversight to prevent the City falling victim to scarcity-driven development schemes in the coming years. I also propose each neighborhood declares/creates a park "capital." This creates the heart and lungs to keep each neighborhood vital, breathing, circulating: Let's play and laugh together? Maybe include dog parks and splash pads at each of the capitals?
4. Perhaps this is meant as a question about gun violence? If so, there are many individuals much smarter than I am who have devoted their lives to its study and the solutions [Marshall Rosenberg, for example]. I commit to bringing their ideas to town halls to learn what Kalamazoo wants to do about public safety. This is not justice deferred. It is a belief that gun violence is not ubiquitous across the world, and a belief that those most affected by the exponential consequences of the violence should be leading the way to peace. We all bleed the same, and the City is only five miles wide. We can't afford to live in fear.

#### Jeanne Hess

Age 64. Kalamazoo City Commissioner. BS, University of Michigan. MS, Western Michigan University. 35 years as a coach and professor at Kalamazoo College. Community volunteer and advocate. Now 4 years serving on city commission. Campaign Phone: 269-207-4133. Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Team.JeanneHess/](https://www.facebook.com/Team.JeanneHess/).

1. As an athlete, I was always coachable, a team player, and an enthusiastic supporter of my team. As a coach, I honed my leadership, organization, and presentation skills. I feel that the work of commission is collaborative in nature, and requires a positive, optimistic outlook. I was able to propose commission support of the Moral Courage Racial Training for employees in the city; I was also a member of the DEI subcommittee which crafted the recently passed ordinance establishing the DEI director in perpetuity. I believe my skills as a collaborator will be useful as the city works toward its goal of becoming anti-racist.
2. I believe the City will face many challenges, but the two I will address are gun violence and dealing with changes in our infrastructure. Reducing gun violence is commission's top priority for 2024. We do this by collaborating with entities throughout the city including, but not limited to Public Safety, Urban Alliance, ISAAC, GVI, and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation's Blueprint for Peace. This is the ultimate community work! Secondly, in the next few years we will see major infrastructure work, replacing water mains and roadways and building the event center within our downtown. This will require patience, communication, and education.
3. I am promoting the fact that Kalamazoo is an Education City. As we claim that as a primary value, and understand education to mean "the drawing forth" of each person's best self, we will honor all forms of education as worthy. Our official institutions, public and private schools, The Promise, trades education, non-profits, and organizations educate throughout the life cycle from Cradle Kalamazoo to OLLI and Hospice. Opportunities for teaching and learning abound here, and we should claim it for everyone, especially as we work to eliminate generational poverty. Everyone in Kalamazoo deserves to have an opportunity to live their best life.
4. We have the largest Department of Public Safety in the US, cross training all our officers in fire, police, and first responder. I have participated on 3 ride-alongs with officers; I have worked closely with the department as they continue to practice a true community policing model. Commission voted in an added social work position in the department, which has been instrumental in dealing with many issues beyond the officers' training. Pastors on Patrol program makes a difference for officers and the people they assist. The department has embraced DEI with an ast. chief position, created the PAL program and has hired a Community Collaborator

# Kalamazoo City Commission, continued

## Esteven Juarez

Age 36. Site pastor of Vanguard Church. I have the privilege of serving as a city commissioner for the last 2 years where I have learned the ins and outs of how the city works. The responsibility that I have to the community allows me to ensure that the city of Kalamazoo is working to create a better Kalamazoo for all. Campaign Phone: 269-352-7693.

1. I have the privilege of serving as a city commissioner for the last two years. I have a deep desire to bring long lasting transformation to our community. It takes a collective impact to bring about that transformation. I have been working hard to ensure that we are doing our part in fight for the vary issues that see in Kalamazoo. Building relationships, addressing the issues, and working with the commission to allocate resource where they need to be. Standing on the Frontline of various issues. Encouraging the community to take a stance against these issues and to be the change we won't to see.
2. Poverty is the biggest issue Kalamazoo is facing. Poverty is like a spiderweb it effects everything. We talk about poverty like we have the answers to it, but we don't. There has to be a greater value put on human life. We owe to the greater good of Kalamazoo to ensure that prosperity is a goal for all of Kalamazoo. We need to take the precautions to make sure everyone has the opportunity to obtain social mobility. It take many partners to see this happen. We need a collective response from many diffent sectors like education, Healthcare, employers to housing and more. We need local, state and the federal government response to this crisis's
3. Imagine Kalamazoo is a great way for our community to be directly involved with the future of our city. The input from the community drives the vary changes that Kalamazoo needs. The city of Kalamazoo offer community input on various projects and initiative. I will continue to fight for our community to see that Kalamazoo to remain Honest, Open and Transparent.
4. No they are not. Public safety need more personal vary under staffed. We need to incentives our hiring opportunities give people a reason to want to work fo KPS. Continue to cultivate strong and humble leadership. We need to create a thriving department that promotes DEI and stands by it.

## Jeff Messer

Age 48. Gig Worker. Western Michigan University alumnus (accountancy, economics, gender & women's studies, Lee Honors College). Boy Scouts of America (Eagle Scout with bronze palms, National Jamboree, Brownsea training). Regular attendee and participant in Kalamazoo City Commission meetings since October 2012. Regular attendee/participant in City Commission advisory board meetings: Planning Commission (since June 2013), Zoning Board of Appeals (2014), Downtown Development Authority & DEGA (2017), Parks & Rec. Advisory Board (2020). Adopted Davis Street Park (May 2021). Rank MI Vote ranked choice voting volunteer. Campaign Phone: 269-350-4336. Website: messer.substack.com/. Facebook: www.reddit.com/user/KalamazooMi/. Twitter: jeffmessenger. Video:youtu.be/geL\_miRev10?t=6640. Instagram: kalamazoo.substack.com/.

1. My greatest success before the City Commission was on August 20, 2018. My organizing efforts resulted in the attendance of about 100 people at the meeting, about half of whom spoke against the onerous, major rewrite of park rules. After over 2 hours of public comments, the proposal failed resoundingly and Assistant City Attorney Robert Cherry apologized for writing them. Continued public anger against the proposal resulted in a 1-month protest occupation of Bronson Park that generated state-wide media coverage.
2. Restrictive zoning reduces housing choice and increases housing prices. This is modern day redlining: neighborhoods are restrictively zoned to intentionally inflate housing prices to keep out "undesirable" people. In 2019, I suggested to the City Commission that they eliminate single family zoning and permit duplexes and triplexes in those areas. A lack of affordable housing is one of the major issues that underlies many other problems. The city causes this problem by artificially limiting the housing supply and concentrating poverty. The Land Bank squats on vacant lots that could be housing, if alternatives weren't prohibited.
3. The City Commission ought to seek approval on action items from its citizen advisory boards (e.g. Parks & Rec., Environmental Concerns). The majority of action items appear on the consent agenda w/ only 3 days public notice, no citizen advisory board approval, no public comment, and are approved en masse w/o discussion. If the City Commission routinely sought advice from its citizen advisory boards, more people would volunteer to serve on those boards. One of my accomplishments before the City Commission is the automatic placement of all ordinance amendment first readings upon the regular agenda, which allows for public comment and discussion
4. KDPS [...] technology companies like Amazon Ring, Flock, and Fusus, which use police departments across the nation to promote sales of their products and build their private, global, live mass surveillance networks. These systems do not deter crime, as evidenced by the recent vandalism of the new Abraham Lincoln statue in Bronson Park, despite the presence of surveillance cameras in the park. These networks are used to control populations and suppress dissent, as the totalitarian Communist Chinese have done in Hong Kong. In June 2019, I warned the City Commission of KDPS's plans to deploy mass surveillance technology.

## James Mitchell

Age 70. Engaged in the creation of an internet start up. BA, Economics, Kalamazoo College. Master of Public Administration, Western Michigan University. Previously: Institutional Researcher and Assistant to the President of Kalamazoo College, Special Projects Coordinator for Blue Cross Blue Shield southern Michigan district, Assistant to the City Manager In Battle Creek. Campaign Phone: 269-249-8444. Website: thinkdifferentlykalamazoo.com.

1. Several decades ago, higher education was facing an enrollment slump due to changing demographics and the end of the baby boom. This was a specially challenging issue for private schools. In my capacity at the time, I was charged with making recommendations to address this situation. I decided that this previously unimaginable problem required a unique solution. Turning conventional wisdom on its' head Kalamazoo College went from just admitting students to actively recruiting talented students. It was regarded as heresy at the time, but is now a standard practice in higher education. Kalamazoo must now think out of the box.
2. Kalamazoo is at a crossroads. The combination of inflationary pressures and a rapidly declining industrial base has led to budget challenges funding even the most basic services. The consequences of this reality is evident in every facet of city operations including crumbling streets and bridges, delayed police responses, and a decaying water and sewer infrastructure. The Foundation for Excellence annual contribution is a life preserver, not an ultimate solution. Our overburdened taxpayers need an administration that returns to the basics, fostering development as well as returning unused exempt properties to the tax base.
3. Most outreach programs have limited success because citizens feel powerless. Neighborhood associations are often viewed as just another layer of bureaucracy promoting the agenda set at City Hall. True "well being" starts with defining "community" beyond the city

limits, meaning the entire county. Kalamazoo cannot continue to devote its limited financial resources for subsidized homeless assistance. The far wealthier governmental units of Portage and Oshtemo must start sharing the burden. If this doesn't happen Kalamazoo will face a new category of homeless; those who lose their homes to unaffordable property taxes.

4. According to the City's own data, public safety officers are difficult to recruit and is understaffed by 10 to 20 percent of budgeted levels. This reflects in longer response times as well as selective enforcement of laws and ordinances. Since our officers are uniquely positioned to also provide firefighting services, it is critical that Kalamazoo make public safety its highest priority. Negative attitudes about police promoted by certain politicians and agitators are counterproductive to community adhesiveness and security. Ride along programs to see the officer's point of view should be actively encouraged. I strongly support the KDPS.

## Chris Praedel

Age 38. Executive Director, Nonprofit Housing Organization, Community Homeworks. BA, Management, Western Michigan University. MA, Teaching, Dominican University. City Commissioner, 2019-present. Commission Liaison to Planning Commission, Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS), Pension Board, Blue Ribbon Panel on Municipal Revenue (2015), First Amendment Subcommittee, City Attorney Search Committee. Kalamazoo Literacy Council (Board Member 2013-2022). El Concilio Campaign Cabinet (2022-current). 60th/41st District Service Office (Board Member 2020-2022). Campaign Website: chrispraedel.com. Facebook: facebook.com/cpraedel. Twitter: chrispraedel. Video: youtube.com/chrisforkzoo. Instagram: instagram.com/chrispraedel/.

1. I serve as a nonprofit executive in the housing sector, working to keep low-income families in their home. Each day I get a unique lens into the struggles families face in our community. This provides me with a better understanding of the complexities of our local housing crisis and the creativity necessary to tackle it. I am also a young father of three boys, ages 8, 7 and 3. My boys guide so much of my decision making as I contemplate difficult decisions on behalf of our community. I'm running for re-election because I want to continue to create a future we can be proud to hand over to the next generation.
2. Gun violence and safety in our neighborhoods remain my top priority. One person losing their life to gun violence is one too many. No parent should worry about their child playing in their own yard because of the violence on their street. We need to continue to invest in programs that laser focus on individuals most at-risk, such as the Bridging Opportunities program operated by the Boys & Girls Club. Affordable housing will continue to be a critical issue for us to tackle. To keep pace with our shortage, we need to use every tool at our disposal to incentivize, reduce barriers, and attract investment in affordable options of every type.
3. Starting next year, we will begin community engagement for the next Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Master Plan. We have an opportunity to envision the community we want to create together in the next 10 years. I hope we can elicit record involvement and interest in this exciting process. The best future is one that we are all involved in crafting. It is important that each interested voice is heard and we make the process highly accessible and meaningful.
4. KDPS has focused on continuously improving two main areas: building trust through the community policing model of engagement in our neighborhoods and more targeted and proactive approaches to support young people who are most at-risk of involvement in violence. KDPS continues to find creative ways to support our young people with strategic partners, through youth programs such as Police Athletic League and Bridging Opportunities. KDPS recently instituted a new community social services team to support mental health crisis calls and better wrap around support of the houseless community. I believe these strides will help turn the tide.

## Alonzo Wilson II

Age 32. Project Controls Specialist / CSM Group. Bachelor of Science Engineering in Industrial & Operations Engineering. Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee - Member. Campaign Phone: 269-350-3263. Website: www.vote4wilson.com/.

1. As a Kalamazoo native, I am familiar with the community and what needs to be done in order for us to thrive! My professional/academic career as an engineer and project manager allows me to develop and implement strategic solutions to our city's complex problems. My experience in project controls has allowed me to manage budgets across multi-million dollar construction projects, which will serve me well on the City Council when it comes to deciding how our budget will be allocated. This skillset is especially important at this time because there are many problems to address, with limited resources available.
2. Healthcare accessibility and Education are the two major issues confronting the city. No family should have to sacrifice their health in order to afford other basic necessities of life. I plan on supporting initiatives to make healthcare more affordable/accessible, as well as increasing availability of mental health resources and fighting the stigma attached to it. Regarding education, we must ensure that schools have adequate resources and that students are prepared for pursuing higher education. I plan on supporting initiatives to recruit/retain top leaders in education and focus on college preparedness for students (especially in STEM).
3. The wellbeing of our community is largely dependent on the collaboration of its constituents with elected officials. Community engagement increases the visibility and understanding of issues and empowers communities to have their say over decisions that affect their lives, their towns, cities and neighborhoods. Once elected, I plan on supporting programs that encourage our community, especially those from underserved neighborhoods who are often left out of these conversations, to share their thoughts on important issues and work together to develop feasible solutions.
4. Public safety represents the protection of the general public, not discriminating by socioeconomic status. I believe that the current level of police presence is adequate, there is a mutual distrust between the community and the police. Intentionally increasing or decreasing police presence would trigger additional anxieties on either side and cause even more strain on the relationship. Additionally, focusing more on rehabilitation rather than detention will serve our community very well!



*The stakes are too high for government to be a spectator sport.*

—Barbara Jordan

# Portage City Mayor & Council

## Questions

1. What skills or talents would you bring to the Portage City Council if you are elected? Give an example of how you've used one or more of them and describe why are they especially important at this time in the history of the City.
2. What are the two major issues confronting the City in the next two years? How do you propose to address them?
3. What policies and programs will you promote to enhance citizen involvement in the wellbeing of our community?
4. Is Portage following a "wise growth" strategy that balances environmental, cultural and economic interests, particularly with respect to the quality of life for citizens, while promoting business development? Provide examples to illustrate your position.

## Portage City Mayor

### Two-year term—Vote for one

*Description: The Mayor is the presiding officer and member of the Council with all the powers and duties of that office, including the right and duty to vote on questions before the Council. The Mayor also advises the Council and makes recommendations concerning the legislative and policy-making affairs of the City.*

#### Patricia M. Randall

Age 60. Mayor of Portage. BBA, Finance. Fourteen years on the Portage City Council, six years as Mayor. Campaign Phone: 269-329-4400. Website: [patriciamrandall.com](http://patriciamrandall.com). Facebook: [Facebook.com/patriciarrandall](https://www.facebook.com/patriciarrandall).

1. I understand the importance of consensus building and am not afraid to lead. I lead the charge to build a new senior center after the voters had turned down two millage requests. My vision was to build this new facility using private and public funds. Two years of fund raising, despite the setbacks from COVID, \$5.7 million was raised of which the city matched dollar per dollar. Today we have the Portage Zhang Senior Center which is the crown jewel of our community. Membership has exploded to 3500, a 200% increase over one year. Building community, allowing seniors to age in place and promoting inclusion and equity are so important.
2. The housing shortage is an issue we are trying to address. All types of housing are needed. The city is actively trying to capitalize on the county housing millage dollars and build work force housing. People that work here should be able to live here. Declining retail shopping at brick and mortar retail space in a community known for destination shopping is a concern. We need to reimagine this space, especially the Crossroads Mall. By promoting zoning

changes, we hope to get ahead of this decline. Housing, restaurants, boutique shopping which connects to our trail system would be a success story. Other communities have done this. So can we!

3. The Portage Zhang Senior Center has become a regional mecca for building community. We know people need and want this. Building a new farmers market would also build community while supporting local producers. Our commitment to our Parks System is something we take great pride in. From pickleball to reptile and bird programs we bring people of all ages together. Our Summer Concert Series is well attended and is free and open to all. Fridays at the Flats is a magnet for people to enjoy free concerts while dining at local food trucks.
4. A wise growth strategy is the ultimate goal and something we are striving for. Growth allows the city to maintain the high level of services our citizens deserve and expect, without raising taxes. Our growth last year was 5% and we have not increased our millage rate the entire time I have been on council. Updating our masterplan, with citizen input, is important as we try to balance this much needed continued growth and citizens' desire for quality of life and open space. We know we cannot attract new businesses if there is not adequate housing for their employees.

## Portage City Council

### Four-year term—Vote for up to three

*Description: The City Council is responsible for adopting and amending City laws and ordinances, determining City policies and standards, and authorizing the annual City budget. The Council also determines City tax millage rates and utility rates, approves contracts and agreements for the City, and directs the City Manager. The City Council consists of seven members, including the Mayor and the Mayor Pro-Tempore.*

#### Chris Burns

Age 36. Assistant Director of Research, Greenleaf Trust. Masters of Accounting, High Distinction, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan. B.A., Economics, High Honors, University of Michigan. Served 6 years on Portage City Council, Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Certified Financial Planner™ professional, CFA® charterholder. Campaign Phone: 708-710-3102. Website: [www.cburns.org](http://www.cburns.org). Facebook: [www.facebook.com/people/Re-elect-Chris-Burns-for-Portage-City-Council/100095352343348/](https://www.facebook.com/people/Re-elect-Chris-Burns-for-Portage-City-Council/100095352343348/)

1. Since 2017, I have proudly served on Portage City Council. Over that time, the citizens of Portage have elected scientists, lawyers, law enforcement and healthcare professionals. I am a finance professional with a CPA license. I have enjoyed collaborating with my diverse colleagues by focusing on crafting budgets and policies that enrich the quality of life in Portage while safeguarding the City's financial prosperity. I advocated expediting some of the City's Capital Improvement Program projects, leading to debt and interest savings that benefit taxpayers. If re-elected, I will continue use my expertise to guide the City's financial affairs.
2. One important issue relates to conduct and decorum for our locally elected leaders. The Portage City Council has historically served as a prime example of professionalism and effectiveness in Kalamazoo County. This cohesion allows Portage to attract top-tier municipal professionals to work for the city. The second major issue relates to land development. As major employers like Pfizer, Stryker, and FedEx invest in Portage, it necessitates prudent residential and commercial planning. Striking a balance between affordability, traffic management, and environmental considerations will be pivotal for our future success.
3. In my time as a City Councilmember I have served on a Communications sub-committee that works with the City's Office of Public Information. Today, our efforts have resulted in diverse information channels, including the Portager newsletter, impactful social media profiles for City updates, public safety alerts, and Council activities. Embracing technology like PlowTraxx™ and SeeClickFix has simplified citizen interaction with relevant City departments for issue resolution. Additionally, our volunteer citizen-led boards contribute significantly—consider joining to make a difference! I will push for transparency and inclusivity in Portage.
4. We are always seeking to improve our growth strategies and I believe Portage has been fairly successful historically. One recent example relates to the Zhang Portage Community Senior Center. Since making the public investment to build that lovely facility, we have seen an uptick in interest for building senior housing and assisted living facilities located near the Center. I often hear Portage families speak about difficulties finding adequate senior living nearby, so I view this as a major win for the City and as an example of our growth strategies working to improve the lives of Portage families.

#### Charley Coss

Self Employed, owner. Masters of Public Administration. I have served on various boards and work in various roles throughout the last 20 years in Kalamazoo County. Campaign Phone: 269-290-1237. Website: [votecoss.com](http://votecoss.com). Facebook: [fb.com/votecoss](https://www.facebook.com/votecoss). Twitter: [votecoss](https://twitter.com/votecoss).

1. I have worked in the public and private sectors most of my life, and I have run my own businesses. I am interested in working with fellow council members to foster a more transparent process. I have worked with many boards and will bring those skills to represent Portage.
2. State revenue sharing changes, we need to be prepared to manage a downsizing in the state monies. Law enforcement (Public Safety) - we need more police personnel and better pay. They are the foundation to the health and safety of every Portage resident. I support both Fire and Police.
3. We need to bring in our talented "Boomer" population and facilitate their working in our schools and parks systems. They are an amazing generation and still have many years to hand their knowledge to all our younger residents.
4. We need to streamline the way we think about services for our city government. The use of new and "cliche" models of thought are mostly ineffective. Where there are always better ways to handle resources and inter-jurisdictional management of services, I would encourage less "judgmental" consultant driven systems, and finding efficiencies and moving resources where needed. Managing the city government has been made way to complicated for what it is.

#### Tony Lorentz

Age 79. Upjohns, 30 years, owned and operated Lorentz Auction and Appraisal Service. Some college but mostly attended HVAC factory schools. I have been in HVAC and construction, working with engineers on new HVAC multi million dollar projects. Campaign Phone: 269-720-8874.

1. Working on large scale projects, working with committees, working with customers, negotiating and solving problems. I found that negotiating and bringing people together to solve problems were an important part of completing projects. I do believe that we need to do the same for issues facing the city. We need to be transparent and listen to the concerns of citizens.
2. Taxes and growth. We need people to have more say in public projects, that affect them directly, before the contracts and deals are done. Since I moved here 13 years ago my property taxes have doubled. The high taxes affect seniors especially and we need to make sure that people can afford to live here in the future. The costs of projects should be in line with the benefit they provide.
3. I support current city programs for park and recreations and volunteer community participation. We need to encourage citizens to attend council meetings and educate them about the importance of voting participation regarding local issues. The Portager is an excellent publication.
4. I realize that balancing the different interests is not an easy task, but we need to maximize existing structures and properties first before building new. For example do we need a new Farmers Market? We already have Celery Flats, it has plenty of room, utilities, parking and a great atmosphere. High density housing could be built a little further out of the main district, we own plenty of land. Portage central district is very busy and already congested. Lake central should be preserved as family oriented.

#### Mark McKeon

Age 36. Senior Master Data Specialist. BA, WMU (Major x2: International and Comparative Politics & Organizational Communications; Minor: Arabic). MA, WMU (Masters in International Development Administration). El Concilio - Board Member (22-Present). Stryker - Quality Systems Data (20-Present). Real Estate Investor - (14-Present). Perrigo - Master Data (19-20). Stryker - Process Improvement Analyst Contractor (18-19). Bethany Christian Services - Refugee ILP/Job Development (16-18). Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education - Teacher (11-13). AmeriCorps\*NCCC- AmeriCorps Member/Ambassador (06-07). Campaign Website: [vote4mckeon.com/](http://vote4mckeon.com/).

1. One important one, bringing community members together for community challenges. At Bethany, I brought the City of Vicksburg and Schoolcraft, the Kalamazoo Metro, the Enterprise MichiVan Director, Michigan Works!, and numerous businesses together to promote affordable and reliable transportation for employees. This is important currently because we have poor East-West public transportation routes for people to get to employers reliably, we have underutilized commercial properties and people wanting to develop non-developed land. By bringing our community members together for creative solutions we can solve our issues for sustainable growth.
2. First, Affordable housing units. Here we should repurpose underutilized commercial spaces like around Crossroads mall, various green houses, and others as well as giving height waivers for 50-70ft buildings for small apartments, townhouses, and single-family housing. We need vertical development, not the destruction of our undeveloped natural areas. Second, elementary school renovations. The example here is Haverhill that is underfunded and a completion timeline that will not be ahead of schedule. We also have it being identified as the only swing school. This is double the busses and drop-offs/pick-ups for a small neighborhood for how long?
3. I plan to promote apprenticeship style programming between PPS, KRESA, and employers to get high school students summer internships filling entry level roles to learn about opportunities for post education work, benefits, and build acumen for workplace etiquette. This whole idea started after speaking with a few firefighters locally at the farmer's market about how applications are at an all-time low. We need to expose our youth to employers so they have first-hand experience job opportunity knowledge. This will encourage graduation rates, employment for employers, and keeping newly skilled graduates local.



# Portage City Council, continued

4. No, we need to focus on enabling affordable public transportation for residents to reliably get to and from work while alleviating congestions. We need to focus on repurposing underutilized commercial property for affordable housing stock. We need to increase our hands-on jobs training for our youth. We need to protect our undeveloped natural resources. All of these combined benefit each other and our community for sustainable “wise growth”, meaning more tax revenue (housing), increased economic activity (businesses), safeguarding our natural environment (healthy environment), all of which sets the stage for the future.

## Nicole Miller

Age 38. Owner, CEO, and Advisor at Travel with Nikki.com. Bachelor's Degree, Community Health Education, Western Michigan University. Associates, Physical Therapist Assisting, Kellogg Community College. 7 years of serving on the Aeronautics Board of Trustees (one of two women). Travel Agency Owner for 14 years. 7 years of working as a Physical Therapist Assistant. 38 year resident of Portage. Campaign Phone: 269-339-0927. Website: ElectNicoleMiller.com. Facebook: Facebook.com/electnicolemiller.

1. I am an energetic, positive person with great communication skills. My organizational skills have led me to build a successful travel agency with many satisfied travelers. My travelers comment that my organizational skills make it so they will never attempt a trip again without my help and guidance. I have the gift of listening to both sides of an issue and understanding the “why” behind each opinion which allows me to explain a proposed resolution that all parties can understand. These attributes are needed on the Portage Council to lead toward the city's growth and change over the next few years.
2. Affordable workforce housing. I am dedicated to a holistic growth strategy that embraces affordable residential, workforce, and commercial development. With careful consideration of potential impacts and adherence to responsible density, as well as providing easy access to resources that workforce residents need and a home they can be proud of. I envision a community where growth coexists harmoniously with our established character. Connection and Expansion of Green Space- I'm dedicated to growing safe green spaces, parks, and trails. This expansion will foster vibrant hubs of community activity and strengthen our sense of unity.
3. (a) Portage's methods of communication can be improved to be more transparent and responsive. I am dedicated to explaining not only the “what” of decisions but also the “why.” By providing citizens with a deeper understanding of the rationale behind choices, we can bridge the gap between the city's actions and residents' expectations, ultimately fostering trust and collaboration. (b) Finding a centrally located permanent home for a Portage Farmers' Market that can be multi use and will promote healthy lifestyles and support growers from Portage and the surrounding communities and foster community engagement.
4. Portage has always promoted parks and greenspace, and is in discussion about redesigning the street system to promote walking and bicycling. And planning is in development to increase affordable workforce housing. Residents are concerned about the issues of road “diets” and school crowding as they relate to growth. My main impetus for running for this office is to try to increase communication and listen to proposals and ideas from constituents. With careful consideration of potential impacts and adherence to responsible density codes, I envision a community where growth coexists harmoniously with our established character.

## Kathleen Olmsted

Small Business Owner. Bachelor of Science, Western Michigan University. 25+ years in Customer Service, 20+ years in Mortgage Servicing Quality Control, 25+ years Volunteering. Campaign Phone: 269-280-0400. Website: votekat.us. Facebook: fb.com/votekatforPortageCityCouncil.

1. Communication skills are extremely important to get a message across and reach out to various communities. I have 25+ years of Customer Service background in various capacities. I don't mind knocking on doors in a community, making phone calls, sending emails. We represent the City and its residents so we need be able to go into the heart of the community to find out what Portage City can help them with. I'm also a Small Business Owner and have first hand knowledge of finance deadlines, IRS deadlines, budgeting, finding new & efficient ways to improve on processes. “That's how we've always done it” does not cut it in today's world.
2. The Community's safety! Crime-especially property crime is on the increase, Resident's don't feel safe. So, thusly we must support and hire more Law Enforcement-both Fire & Police Officers. Property Taxes are forever increasing and driving many out of Portage. Over 3 & 3/4s of my tax bill goes to some form of education. We do NOT need more millages to pay for schooling. It's not helping because Michigan rates #49 for education in the U.S.A. Let's find redundancies, remove redundancies and work within the City's budget. Less Government is good Government.
3. Communication, Communication, Communication- what policies and programs does our community want or need to involve more citizens and make Portage safe. If it is the Farmer's Market, then I would support and grow the Farmer's Market, support the local vendor's and find private partnerships to help with the Market and also help with food hardships. If it is a safety concern, then let's hire more Law Enforcement at a higher pay and get back to having Community Officers patrol neighborhoods and create relationships with the residents. Citizen involvement needs to have free flowing communication to the City and Back from the City.
4. Any business - even a business like the City of Portage can streamline services and find efficient solutions to doing business. Portage can promote small businesses/big businesses without promoting more regulations or hinderances and provide a pathway to join private resources and public resources to work together. A little jewel that the city has is the Portage Zhang Senior Center that can assist the community and promote well being and could be a great contact resource for the community. We need to also keep Supporting our Veterans, Standing behind Law Enforcement, Protecting our Seniors and promoting Transparency.

## Jim Pearson

Age 67. Retired Senior Research Scientist at Pfizer; Current Mayor Pro-Tem at City of Portage. Ph.D., Biochemistry, Purdue University. Portage City Council since 2011. Mayor Pro-Tem since 2013. Board Member, Central County Transit Authority. Former Vice-chair, Portage Planning Commission. Former Chair, Portage Zoning Board of Appeals. New Portage Sr. Center Fundraising Committee. Former Chair, County Environmental Health Council. Former Member, County Consolidated Dispatch Authority. Former Special Deputy, Sheriff's Dept. Diver. Campaign Phone: 269-303-5459. Facebook: Facebook.com/Pearson4Portage.

1. I have served on the Portage City Council for the past 12 years and unanimously elected by fellow Council Member as Mayor Pro-Tem. My skill set includes data analysis, negotiation, and compromise. I have worked well with area county leaders outside of Portage in the areas of both Transit and 911 Dispatch Authorities and Chaired the County Environmental Health Advisory Council for 5 years.
2. Housing needs and the Crossroads Mall are two major issues. Portage recently secured \$3M from the County for workforce housing needs. We have also partnered with Kalamazoo

Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS) to develop two affordable homes on Oakland Drive. This is in addition to the many homes at all income levels being built in Portage. The mall situation is difficult because there are multiple owners in different sections of the mall. Eventually, if the mall property value continues to fall, I think Council should step in and work to re-zone this parcel for forward thinking mixed-use future development.

3. More citizen engagement is wanted, but City Council meetings can last for hours. Due to Covid we now allow citizens comments via phone in our two Statement of Citizens agenda sections, but it's rarely used. I will lead efforts to better promote this new agenda addition so that it will entice citizens to call in and voice concerns and suggestions for City Council.
4. Portage is an efficiently run city. Our roads are second to none within the county, our schools, library and trails attract families, and our parks are well kept with indoor bathrooms. We recently opened a new \$13M Portage Senior Center with about half of the cost coming from private donations and State funding. We are attracting smart business developments like the large expansions for Pfizer, Stryker, and the new FedEx facility. We recently modified our industrial zoning to attract small biotech companies like National Biomolecular Services that recently opened across the street from the airport.

## Steve Pieczko

Age: 59. Software Consultant and Small Business Owner. Bachelors and Masters degree in Computer Science. Experience and qualifications: See my answer to question #1. Campaign Phone: 847-857-0284. Website: www.PickSteve.com. Facebook: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550210786200.

1. I believe that my background as a Small Business Owner will help with what I believe needs to be addressed in Portage. After attending numerous city council and planning commission meetings this year, it's clear to me that we need new leadership in the Portage City Council. My skills and talent are in organizing and facilitating project teams to solve complex issues. In my current occupation, I work with Fortune 500 companies to solve complex organizational issues which involves building cross functional teams to collaborate and resolve big issues.
2. A large percentage of the city council meetings center around inadequate affordable housing, public safety, and the preservation of natural resources. Implementing programs to provide more affordable family housing requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various strategies. I would begin by first examining land that is available to be developed, which includes looking at abandoned or dilapidated commercial properties before clearing any undeveloped areas. Over the past few years, we have seen inflation negatively impacting everyone, I would examine the possibility of lowering the tax rate to ease the burden of citizens impacted.
3. On a regular basis, I would improve the communications of projects that are in the discussion and planning stages and include financial impacts of these projects. I would leverage the Portager newsletter and online portals to improve communications with the residents. Moreover, we need to communicate progress on the master plan. We should also provide a reoccurring online poll of the residents to collect feedback on the master plan and other projects in the planning stages. For example, it was recently announced that the Oakland Commons project on Shaver and Oakland is moving forward which received a few objections from the neighbors.
4. The city of Portage appears to be on an aggressive housing expansion. The current city council is not listening to the concerns of the residents as seen by the recent assemblance of residence from the Lake Center district. Residents have created SpeakUpPortage.com to voice their concerns and improve communications on projects impacting the residents around new developments. The city promoted the creation of a task force to collect input from the residents, however the task force has yet to have a productive meeting and citizens questions have not been answered. The city needs to improve how they work and collaborate with the residents.

## Jihan Ain Young

Age 40. Homemaker. B.A., Political Science, University of Michigan. JPMorgan Chase & PNC Bank (Personal Banker and Financial Analyst). City of Portage Human Services Board Vice Chair. Kalamazoo Civic Theatre Board of Directors. State of Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council Parent Alternate. Kalamazoo County Interagency Coordinating Council Parent Rep. Kalamazoo Chapter of The Links, Inc Ethics & Standards Chair. Campaign Phone: 269-359-1064. Website: www.jihanyoung.com/. Facebook: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550580341763&mibextid=LQQJ4d

1. I'm a hardworking leader who listens, acts, cares. I work in collaboration with others and continually thrive to make my community a better place to live. In 2021 as a newly appointed Human Services Board member I was tasked to work with PPS for Red Ribbon Week. A major success, we're heading into year 3 of collaborations including student participation at the City Council meeting and a program at West Middle School. I can formulate messages that cross generational beliefs that are authentic, truthful, and valued by all. As a council member, communication is of utmost importance when dealing with matters of differing viewpoints.
2. Government Outreach & Communication: improving communication between citizens and City Council. To make our community thrive it requires concerted input from all residents, elected officials, and city administration. Collaboration provides the opportunity and tools for success. We have the technology to provide communication to residents with updates and create a “Citizens Guide to City Council.” Housing: A program initiative to help inform area citizens of the benefits affordable family housing. The benefit of a program initiative of this nature is it helps to expound upon the “why” & “what” before we get to the “how” as a collective body.
3. (a) Appointments to Citizen Advisory Boards: A major component of community success is the involvement of Portage residents who volunteer their time, expertise, and willingness to give back to our community as members of city boards and commissions. (b) Title VI Non-Discrimination Policy and Non-Discrimination Statement: The wellbeing of our community will thrive when fellow Portage citizens, city administrators, and elected officials treat each other in an equitable way with kindness and respect. (c) Parks and Recreation year-round programs. (d) Neighborhood Support Program: Improving the Livability of Portage Neighborhoods.
4. Yes: Zhang Senior Center-The “Engage, Empower, Enrich” campaign was one the first of its kind including \$2 million donated in private funds by Charles and Lynn Zhang and \$5.5 million contributed from the city of Portage. By providing a communal space where seniors can spend time together, we preserve our history and ensure its passed down to future generations. Property Acquisition for the Public Works Dept: the current facility on S Westnedge can get delayed by trains, which can impact economic and environmental interest in the City. The new facility is free from encumbrances and has the potential for job growth and expansion.

# Parchment City Commission

## Four-year term—Vote for up to three

**Description:** The Parchment City Commission consists of seven members elected at-large by the citizens of Parchment to serve staggered four-year terms. As the elected leaders of the community, the City Commission sets the strategic direction of the City, makes all city policy decisions, approves purchases (above \$2,500), adopts an annual budget, hires a City Manager, approves contracts, reviews regular reports of the City's financial condition and appoints volunteer board and commission members.

## Questions

1. What skills or talents would you bring to the Parchment City Commission if you are elected? Give an example of how you've used one or more of them and describe why are they especially important at this time in the history of the City.
2. What are the two major issues confronting the City in the next two years? How do you propose to address them?
3. What policies and programs will you promote to enhance citizen involvement in the well-being of our community?
4. What are the City's most important environmental concerns? Given demands on the budget, how would you prioritize and address them with adequate funding?

## Douglas C. Fooy

Did not respond in time for publication. For the latest information, visit [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)

## Robin Madaras

Did not respond in time for publication. For the latest information, visit [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)

## Justin Mendoza

Age 32. Executive Director, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines. B.S., Biomedical Sciences & Neuroscience, Central Michigan University. MPH Health Policy & Regulatory Affairs, Yale University. Justin holds degrees in biomedical sciences and public health, has served on the board of directors of small nonprofit organizations for more than 7 years, and recently ran for State House District 42. He has been a community organizer, policy analyst, and legislative advocate for nonprofit organizations, influencing policymakers to make health care more affordable his entire career. Campaign Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/JustinMendoza-ForMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/JustinMendoza-ForMichigan). Twitter: [justindmendoza](https://twitter.com/justindmendoza).

1. I bring a solid understanding of government budget-making processes, a detail-oriented approach to policy, and a critical eye to the effects of decisions on fellow citizens. As an advocate for healthcare reform, I have tracked and worked on federal and state budget processes, caught issues in legislation (and shared them with lawmakers before passage), and have collected feedback and communicated with decisionmakers on behalf of their constituents. I will bring open, transparent feedback and help to ensure the commission is living up to its goals to serve the people of Parchment.
2. One major issue facing the City is the continued flow of large trucks through streets downtown. So far, the City has done a good job of attempting to stem that flow with signage and barricades, but I would be dedicated to finding a solution with our high-volume trucking companies to ensure we reduce that traffic further. Another issue is the heavy sewer connection fees assessed on Parchment residents as a part of the PFAS solution. We averted a public health crisis and made the right call, but I would explore alternative financing, along with our city manager and state legislature, to see if we can reduce payment burdens on residents.
3. I will aim to promote a culture of transparency. The City has been heading in the right direction here, with up-to-date minutes and seeking public input on major decisions, but I would explore other options, like livestreamed meetings and varying hours for feedback sessions to accommodate more schedules. We can meet residents where they are to make involvement easy.
4. One of our biggest environmental concerns is the papermill brownfield. I'm excited to see the City won a \$800,000 grant to support work to clean up the site, and I'll be dedicated to supporting that project any way possible as a part of the City Commission, and helping to search for more opportunities to expand that work.

## Michael Andrew Sanford

Age 56. Adjunct Instructor/Lake Michigan College. A.A., Lake Michigan College 2004. B.A., Grand Valley State University. M.A., Western Michigan University. I have been serving on the Kalamazoo County Board of Public Works since December 2020 and am currently the Interim Chairperson. I have been serving on the Kalamazoo County ID Board since December 2020. Since April of 2022 I have served on the Parchment Parks and Recreation Committee. Campaign Phone: 269-366-4527.

1. I am a committed consensus seeker. I am a talented writer and public speaker. I have the ability to process significant amounts of information, make concise summaries and explanations of the information to those who need that information. As a college educator for the past decade, I have mastered the art of communicating complex ideas, and/or issues to students of all abilities and backgrounds. The City of Parchment needs to have people on the City Commission who are committed to accountable good government, in a day and age when public officials at every level of government are viewed with suspicion, I believe that government is necessary.
2. The City has issues with its infrastructure, my service on the Kalamazoo County Board of Public Works has convinced me that the most pressing problem facing municipal governments and governments at all levels is infrastructure. Sewer issues are not the glamorous part of governing, but they are of vital importance. The other infrastructure issues we must be vigilant about are potable water supply, roads, public transportation, waste management and broad band internet access. These necessary and often unseen aspects of life are of vital importance to the well-being of the citizens of Parchment. We also need to maintain our public safety units.
3. I am deeply committed to our Parks and Recreation, Kindleberger Park is arguably one of the most beautiful parks in all of Southwest Michigan. I will always promote the youth sports and the sense of community that is found there. From Little League and Rocket Football to our Parchment School Athletics, I am committed to these as an avenue to build character and leadership in our children. I will also support and promote our festivals, parade's and monuments. Parchment was built on the paper industry, and we are the only city in America called Parchment, we need to claim this and erect a National Paper Workers Monument.
4. Our environmental concerns revolve around protecting the Kalamazoo River and the Brown Field concerns related to the old paper mill. The City has recently received a large grant to deal with the old mill site, but we must be vigilant to make sure that money is spent appropriately. Also we must make sure that we don't slow walk the recovery of the old mill site due to indecisiveness by member of the City Commission. The money is earmarked and we need to spend it judiciously. Additionally we need to make certain that we are looking for every opportunity Federally and from the State to access the funds we need to turn the mill site around.

## Ballot Proposals

### Kalamazoo County Veterans Millage

- For the purpose of funding dedicated services and programs to Kalamazoo County veterans of United States military service, National Guard, and Reserves, and their dependents, including providing funding for the County Department of Veterans' Services, shall the constitutional limitation on general ad valorem taxes which may be assessed in any one (1) year upon all property within the County of Kalamazoo, Michigan, be increased by a reduced rate of up to a maximum of an additional 0.10 of one (1) mill (0.10 per \$1,000.00 of taxable value) for the period of ten (10) years from 2023 through 2032 inclusive? For example, on a property with a residential market value of \$200,000 (with an estimated taxable value of \$100,000), the .10 mills would equal approximately \$10 of levied tax annually to support veterans throughout Kalamazoo County.

Background: <https://www.yesforvets.com/faqs>

### Kalamazoo City Charter Amendment — Ranked Choice Voting for The Election of City Officers

- Shall the City Charter be amended to provide that the Mayor and City Commission members are to be elected by a Ranked Choice Voting method when it is authorized by State Law?

Learn how it works:

<https://rankmivote.org/what-how/>

<https://www.rcvresources.org>

### Other Ballot Proposals on [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org):

- Kalamazoo Township Proposal To Establish Authorized Charter Millage
- Parchment School District Operating Millage Proposal
- Richland Township Fire Millage

## [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org) Election Information You Need

The content of this Guide is available online at [www.lwvka.org](http://www.lwvka.org) and [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org).

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, VOTE411.org contains information about many races across the country, with content published as it was submitted by candidates. VOTE411 allows voters to compare candidate responses to questions, as well as offering information on voter registration, ID requirements, and election processes such as absentee voting.

**Spread the word about [www.VOTE411.ORG](http://www.VOTE411.ORG)**

# KALAMAZOO COUNTY PRECINCT LOCATIONS

Polls Open Tuesday, November 7, 2023 – 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

## Alamo Township

#1 Township Hall..... 7901 North 6th St.  
 #2 Alamo Community Church ..... 7925 North 6th St.

## Brady Township

#1 Township Hall..... 13123 South 24th St.  
 #2 Chapman Memorial Church ..... 7520 East U Ave.

## Charleston Township

#1 Township Hall..... 1499 South 38th St.

## Climax Township

#1 Township Hall..... 110 North Main St.

## Comstock Charter Township

#1 Galesburg Baptist Church ..... 10100 Shadowlane Dr.  
 #2 Comstock Community Center ..... 6330 King Highway  
 #3 Comstock Christian Reformed Church ..... 5300 Comstock Ave.  
 #4 Northeastern Baptist Church ..... 6536 East G Ave.  
 #5 Church of God Family Worship Center ..... 5841 East H. Ave.  
 #6 Kalamazoo Community Church ..... 2435 North 26th St.  
 #7 Northeastern Baptist Church ..... 6536 East G Ave.

## Cooper Charter Township

#1 Township Hall..... 1590 West D Ave.  
 #2 Fire Station #2..... 3160 McKinley St.  
 #3 Bethel Baptist Church..... 5701 Mt. Olivet Rd.  
 #4 North Bridge Church ..... 8824 Douglas Ave.  
 #5 Cooper's Landing Apts. Community Rm ..... 5001 Cooper's Landing

## Kalamazoo Charter Township

#1 Lakewood Fire Station ..... 3100 Lake St.  
 #2 Northwood Fire Station..... 2617 N. Burdick St.  
 #3 Grace Harbor Church ..... 811 Gorham La.  
 #4 Westwood United Methodist Church ..... 538 Nichols Rd.  
 #5 Westwood Fire Station ..... 1310 Nichols Rd.  
 #6 Agape Christian Church ..... 609 Cherokee St.  
 #7 Second Christian Reformed Church ..... 3015 Nichols Rd.  
 #8 Eastwood Library ..... 1112 Gayle Ave  
 #9 Eastwood Fire Station..... 2703 East Main St.  
 #10 Eastwood Fire Station ..... 2703 East Main St.

## Oshtemo Charter Township

#1 Grange Hall ..... 3234 N. 3rd St.  
 #2 Fire Station #2..... 3500 South 6th St.  
 #3 Oshtemo Branch Library..... 7265 W. Main St.  
 #4 Voyage Church - Fellowship Hall ..... 6339 Atlantic Ave.  
 #5 Skyridge Church ..... 394 S Drake Rd.  
 #6 Centerpoint Church ..... 2345 N. 10th St.  
 #7 Voyage Church - Gymnasium ..... 6339 Atlantic Ave.  
 #8 Oshtemo Community Center..... 6407 Parkview Ave.  
 #9 Township Hall ..... 7275 W. Main St.  
 #10 Oshtemo United Methodist Church ..... 6574 Stadium Drive

## Pavilion Township

#1 Lakeland Reformed Church ..... 10442 South Sprinkle Rd.  
 #2 Christian Evangelical Church..... 9286 South 36th S.  
 #3 Township Hall ..... 7510 East Q Ave.

## Prairie Ronde Township

#1 Township Hall..... 8140 West W Ave.

## Richland Township

#1, #2 & #3 Gracespring Bible Church ..... 8643 Gull Rd.

## Ross Township

#1 Augusta Village Hall ..... 109 W. Clinton St.  
 #2 Yorkville Community Church..... 11523 East D Ave.

## Schoolcraft Township

#1 Township Hall..... 50 East VW Ave.  
 #2 & 4 Schoolcraft Fire Dept. .... 103 N. Grand St.  
 #3 Vicksburg United Methodist Church ..... 217 South Main St.

## Texas Charter Township

#1 Calvary Reformed Church ..... 7829 South 5th St.  
 #2 Township Hall ..... 7110 West Q Ave.  
 #3 KVCC Groves Campus..... 7107 Elm Valley Dr.  
 #4 & 5 Southridge Reformed Church ..... 6726 Texas Drive  
 #6 Calvary Reformed Church..... 7829 South 5th St.

## Wakeshma Township

#1 Township Hall..... 13988 South 42nd St.

## Galesburg City

#1 City Hall ..... 200 E. Michigan Ave.

## Kalamazoo City

#1 & 3 Faith Temple Church of God ..... 402 S. Westnedge Ave.  
 #2 & 4 Western Michigan University Student Center ..... 1070 Arcadia Loop  
 #5 Wesley Foundation ..... 2350 Ring Rd N  
 #6 Kalamazoo RESA West Campus ..... 4606 Croyden Ave.  
 #7 & 9 Douglass Community Association..... 1000 W. Paterson St.  
 #8 & 27 Mt. Zion Baptist Church ..... 120 Roberson St.  
 #10 Temple Baptist Church ..... 3706 Mt. Olivet Rd.  
 #11 Eastside Community Center ..... 1301 East Main St.  
 #12 Oakwood Bible Church ..... 4100 Oakland Dr.  
 #13 & 14 St. Joseph's Catholic School - Bennett Building ..... 930 Lake St.  
 #15 Urban Alliance ..... 1009 E. Stockbridge Ave.  
 #16 & 18 Converge Church ..... 3306 Lovers Lane  
 #17 Greenwood Reformed Church ..... 1815 Winton Ave.  
 #19 & 25 Southern Heights Christian Reformed Church ... 4141 E. Hillandale Dr.  
 #20 Centerpoint City Church..... 326 W. Cork St.  
 #21 & 24 Girl Scouts Building ..... 601 W. Maple St.  
 #22 Third Christian Reformed Church ..... 2400 Winchell Ave.  
 #23 Bethany Reformed Church ..... 1833 S. Burdick St.  
 #26 Parkview Hills Clubhouse ..... 3707 Greenleaf Circle

## Parchment City

#1 Parchment City Hall..... 650 S. Riverview Dr.

## Portage City

#1 Westminster Presbyterian Church ..... 1515 Helen Ave.  
 #2 Goldentree Apartments Community Room ..... 4795 E. Milham Rd.  
 #3 Portage Parks & Recreation Center ..... 320 Library Lane  
 #4 & 6 Lord of Life Lutheran Church ..... 9420 Portage Road  
 #5 & 12 Zhang Portage Community Senior Center ..... 203 E. Centre Ave.  
 #7 K-RESA Service Center..... 1819 E. Milham Rd.  
 #8 & 14 Chapel Hill United Methodist Church..... 7028 Oakland Drive  
 #9 & 15 Prince of Peace Lutheran Church ..... 1747 W. Milham Ave.  
 #11 & 19 Kalamazoo First Assembly of God ..... 5550 Oakland Drive  
 #10 & 13 Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church ..... 9316 Oakland Dr.  
 #16 & 18 The Bridge Church ..... 7200 Angling Road  
 #17 Pathfinder Church ..... 8740 S. Westnedge Ave

Source: Kalamazoo County Clerk / Register Office

