



City of Grand Haven Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Geri McCaleb

Employer: semi-retired/home based sewing business/Mayor City of Grand Haven

**Please feel free to attach a separate sheet if the space provided is not sufficient.*

General

1. What qualifications/experience do you feel you possess that will enable you to fulfill the responsibilities of the elected office you are seeking?

Graduate of GVSU with a degree in Earth Science, served on Grand Haven City Council from 2001 thru 2009, and served as Mayor from 2011 till the present. I have my own home based business for years, "Jeans and More". My parents were small business owners in the Netherlands so I grew up in a household that was business minded.

2. Have you ever run for political office before? If yes, please explain.

As stated above I served on Grand Haven City Council for two four year terms and have served as Mayor for three two year terms to this point.

3. If elected, what would be your top priorities and why?

My aim has been to move Grand Haven ahead as a city while always maintaining our basic identity as a beautiful lakeshore resort community while maintaining a strong manufacturing base. When I first ran for Mayor my main focus was not in taking on new projects but taking care of those things we already have. It's not good to build new things if what you have is falling into disrepair. One of the main things we have focused on is continuing to rebuild our aging infrastructure (water, sewer, and streets). This is necessary for the quality of life of every citizen, existing business and industry, and important in attracting new business. One of the most gratifying things is to partner with business as we see Brownfield sites become productive again.

Also we have built and need to maintain good relationships with our neighboring communities and our schools. We have a great city staff and our city employees take great pride in what they do.

In the process of looking at what we have, the volunteer and philanthropic community working together with the city has accomplished amazing things. We have seen the Musical Fountain rebuilt and drawing huge crowds, the new park like Lynne Sherwood Waterfront Stadium is

close to being a reality replacing the bleachers which have served us well for 50 years, and Grand Haven's iconic Catwalk will go back up next year when the pier project is complete. This is the city working together with all the other entities in the city such as the Chamber, the MSDDA, the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation, area service clubs like the Eagles, Rotary,

4. What is your vision for the next 10 years for the City and how will your leadership help accomplish that vision?

In the next ten years the Grand Landing site will continue to develop and pay the city back for the investment we have made there. I believe we will see development in the MSDDA district which will help right the Downtown TIF and lift the financial burden of that project off the city budget. I also think we will need to deal with the challenge of "being discovered". We need to maintain the quality of life of our own citizens while remaining a summer destination for many. There needs to be balance. We need to be hospitable and welcoming, but people who come here must be respectful of our city, and the amenities we offer.

Economic Development, Tax and General Policy

1. As Mayor what do you consider your role in retaining and attracting new business and industry to the City?

We need to be aware of the challenges that our local businesses face. Last year when we did the city calendar and visited with industries we were able to learn about some of the challenges that manufacturers face today. You can't help if you don't know the need. So dialogue is important. Grand Haven needs to be a city that works. We need our infrastructure to handle the needs of the employer. Grand Haven needs to be a safe and attractive place to live for the professionals we want to attract and retain. We need to continue good relationships with our neighboring communities to maintain a harmonious atmosphere that encourages cooperation and professionalism.

2. What is the number one challenge facing business growth and development in the City?

I think the number one challenge we have is space. We are built out and have very little room for new business or expansions. On our Brownfield sites we are challenged with environmental regulations which increase the costs. The city is up to the challenge to help in any way it can in working with the state to make these areas productive once again.

3. What is the number one area that the City should invest in financially?

I still believe that continuing the work of renewing our infrastructure will continue to be at the forefront of what we need to do. That includes new ways of handling infrastructure related issues as technology keeps changing to improve products and methods.

4. Do you support the use of tax abatements and /or special tax incentives to create jobs and spur economic growth? Why or why not?

I think this very much depends on the situation. Some of the TIF's the city has used have been of benefit and some have not. The boat storage TIF has worked well, while the Grand Landing and Downtown TIF's have not lived up to expectations. They will work out in the long run I do believe, but in the mean time they are being further supported by the taxpayer. IFT's are a benefit to the business in the short run. I believe a large part of the need for special incentives is because the taxing and regulatory environment which we live under increases costs and there needs to be some relief for those extra costs. Some of that regulatory rule is necessary but too much stifles creativity and incentive. Bottom line you must evaluate each situation and do what is best on a case by case basis.

5. As we move to a more regional community and in the face of continued fiscal constraints, what are your thoughts on consolidation of services (police, fire, schools, and transportation to name a few)?

I am a bit cautious about consolidation because the further away the source of power is from the will of the people, the less responsive the source of power needs to be. We need to guard against giving power away under the guise of better management because giving away control is giving up the power to influence and that is very important to the end user. As we see with Lansing and Washington, if power rests elsewhere, there is little the individual can do to affect decisions that are made. When decision making is close to home the power the individual matters much more than when there are layers of insulation because of distance or bureaucracy. I am all about working together, buying together, saving money anyway that we can, but still very much want to guard the ability to make decisions for ourselves.

Talent Attraction

1. Local business and industry has identified that barriers to growth are lack of affordable housing, regional public transportation and qualified employees. As Mayor, what role would you provide in helping to address these issues?

Taken one at a time: Affordable housing or lack thereof, is a factor of being a very desirable place to live. People buying houses in Grand Haven are bidding up houses when they go on the market. We can ask as we see apartments being built to include a range of prices for those units. We can also address in our zoning rules if we want to allow more duplexes or multi-family units in our neighborhoods that are now single family residential. That would be a community decision. As to transportation, with Harbor Transit going to an Authority and its service areas increased through votes of the communities it now serves, I know there has been talk about being able to work together with other services in neighboring communities to provide more coverage. These things do take time and a willingness of everyone to make things happen. These things are complicated by regulations, governing bodies and funding sources but I would love to see this transportation issue be less of a problem for employers. As

to qualified employees I have long been advocate for schools from our secondary and post-secondary educators to put as much emphasis on the skilled trades as they do four year college education. We need doctors, engineers and teachers; we also need plumbers, welders, CAD designers, CNC operators, and those to fill jobs that don't even exist yet. I am very excited to see Shape Corporation partner with PRIME to bring to Grand Haven High School these programs to launch students right into the manufacturing world.

Environmental Policy

1. How would you suggest green space be preserved while at the same time sustaining economic development and growth?

We are extremely fortunate to have one quarter of our city be park land, much of it forested parkland. This park land is fragile and needs to be protected. We live on sand dunes and sand blows away if it's not held in place by vegetation. The fact that we have preserved this much of Grand Haven as parkland speaks to who we are and what is important to us and part of what makes us a desirable place to be. That in itself is part of what sustains us economically. If we allow ourselves to give up these things that are our identity for economic development we will lose that desirability. It would be like killing the golden goose.

Transportation Infrastructure

1. In your opinion, what role do you think local/state government may play in further expanding the regional transportation services throughout West Michigan?

In the studies I have seen such as providing transportation to Grand Valley the ridership is not there to make that a reality at this time. I am sure that Harbor Transit over time will continue seeing what possibilities there are working with Muskegon and the MATT. It is important to have these conversations with neighboring entities and communities to see what possibilities are into the future but it depends on need, desirability, economics and working within the regulatory framework with which these systems operate and are funded.

Please attach additional information regarding your community and business affiliations.