



City of Ferrysburg Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Regina Sjoberg

Employer: Retired

**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?

I have Masters Degrees in both Education and Library Science from Indiana University. My formal education has given me strong research and critical thinking skills, as well as a serendipitous range of knowledge in a variety of fields. I have professional public relations expertise, and this has strengthened my organization and communication skills. I served on Ferrysburg's ZBA for ten years before becoming a Council Member, several of those years as Vice Chairman. I also served on the City's Planning Commission and Deer Advisory Board, and currently represent Ferrysburg on the Ottawa County Ambulance Oversight Committee and the West Michigan Regional Shoreline Development Commission.

I have served on many charitable and community boards. I was President of the Board of the West Michigan Academy of Arts and Academics when that school moved to Ferrysburg, and have also served on the Ottawa County Community Action Agency Advisory Board. I have been President of the Parkwood Village Condo Association Board, served on the board of the West Michigan Division of the American Heart Association as Communications Chair, and on the Tri-Cities Mental Health Task Force in order to support a recent millage effort. I have served as Social Chair for the Spring Lake Yacht Club, and now volunteer at several local community non-profits. These experiences have provided me with both leadership opportunities, and knowledge re: running meetings and leading a group to consensus.

My experiences in conceptualizing and initiating the Ferrysburg Dog Park and Youth Council, as well as in running the Coast Guard Festival Community Picnic for four years, prove my organizational and communication abilities, as well as my commitment to serving Ferrysburg and the Tri-Cities area.

Unlike my opponents, I have been a full-time resident of Ferrysburg for over 21 years. I would say that perhaps my greatest qualification for office is my love of Ferrysburg, and my dedication to community service.

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

I have served on Ferrysburg's City Council since 2008. I was first appointed to a position vacated when Jeff Stille became Mayor. I then successfully ran for Council twice. Other than that, my leadership experiences have been voluntary.

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

My top priorities will be:

Maintaining greenspace. This is key to the health and welfare of a community. This is especially true for our children, and their future children. Once greenspace is gone, it's gone forever. There really isn't much land left for development in Ferrysburg, so tax revenue from increased housing development will be difficult. Shortsighted people might push for the development of parks and nature preserves, so we will need to develop innovative ways to create affordable housing, while maintaining our greenspace.

Resolution of the Smith's Bayou bridge project. The bridge is going to need either repair or replacement – we won't know which for a couple of months. We therefore, do not know how much this project will cost. We will need to secure information and then develop a plan to finance work on the bridge. All the financial advisors with whom I have spoken say bonding is the only way we can handle this project. We can bond up to \$20 million. We can start putting money aside for the financing of the bonds, and we will also seek grants. Our engineer has strongly suggested that we look into some kind of philanthropic support. In fact, she said this was key when applying for grants. I have pledged to lead this effort if elected Mayor. The engineer also suggested a bridge design that includes a "total street" approach – which means including a bike path as part of the project. This will open up additional funding streams for us.

Developing a fair policy regarding short-term rentals. This is a "hot" topic now, and it is going to continue to be so. I have spoken with people on both sides of the issue, and suggested that Council create an ad hoc committee to address STRs. I had lined up pro- and con-STR citizens to serve on the committee, but Council chose not to follow this path. I am convinced that compromise and consensus can be reached through open discussion. No one wants 250 people holding a Facebook promoted rave at a lakeside home. Most everyone agrees that a family renting out a cottage for a couple of weeks is not objectionable. We can create a system that inspects and licenses rentals, but respects property rights.

Effective use of technology in order to maximize citizen participation in City government. We need to update the ways in which we communicate with citizens. People expect and demand instant replies to questions and concerns. The use of social media can assure both responsiveness and transparency in City government. We should stream all Council meetings

on Facebook, and use twitter, email, and other social media to make sure that citizens get the answers they need.

Meeting the needs of a diverse population. Seniors, people with physical and cognitive disabilities, the economically challenged, children – all are going to have needs that must be addressed in one way or the other by the City. For instance, assuring a mass transportation option for those who cannot drive will be crucial. Offering affordable housing for all people will be important, as will supporting a strong school system. Keeping taxes, and water/sewer fees at a level that is affordable for those on a fixed income will be important.

Prioritizing City services. The issue above means that we might have to prioritize City services in order to maintain a strong budget. We will need to work closely with citizens in order to ascertain just what is important to them.

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

My vision for Ferrysburg is that it will maintain its small town feel, while maintaining all the wonderful amenities we already have. We live close enough to big cities to partake in concerts, opportunities for higher education, shopping, and recreational resources. But – and this is a big but – we also have the joy of living close to nature, and can raise our children in a City that respects the environment. We have a strong and carefully developed Master Plan that is consistently reviewed and updated. If we pay attention to that, Ferrysburg will thrive in the future. If we listen to the people who live here, we will be guided by them as we forge that future. That is the way government should be run, and that is exactly why I am running for Mayor. I know I can bring people together to do what they agree is best for their hometown. Joint participation in recreational and business opportunities with our neighboring municipalities will only strengthen us all. I am committed to bringing all these elements together so that Ferrysburg can proudly stand with a strong Tri-Cities community.

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?

I believe a Mayor can act as an ambassador to business and industry, and also as a conduit for progress. I can help identify the assets that offer the best opportunities for growth and develop strategies to support them. In Ferrysburg these might include natural beauty and outdoor resources, as well as proximity to larger cities and cultural opportunities. I can make sure that residents, business owners, and other stakeholders are asked to help develop a vision for the community's future. Public engagement helps ensure that plans reflect the community's needs, and generates public support. I can help the City seek outside funding for special projects and amenities. Outside funding can help increase local interest and commitment and encourage private investment. I believe we need to create incentives for redevelopment - i.e. Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities and tax abatement programs. I

think one prime role a Mayor can play is to encourage cooperation within the community and across the region. The Tri-Cities is really intertwined. Many people who work in Grand Haven or Spring Lake live in Ferrysburg, or the other way around. We can't develop business and industry in a vacuum. Finally, I would support a clean and healthy environment, and invest in natural assets by protecting natural resources and cleaning up and redeveloping polluted properties. This increases the tax base and employment opportunities, removes environmental contamination, and helps encourage investment.

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

Frankly, space. We are a small community, and one of our strongest resources and attractions is the nature that surrounds us. We will have to come up with innovative ways to grow business/industry and provide housing for local workers without destroying that which is our greatest strength.

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

We have to ensure that the services people expect can be delivered to them. That is our first priority. Public safety, road repair and maintenance, water and sewer services – those are the things the City was founded to deliver. I am opposed to a City getting directly involved in development projects. That is the business of private enterprise. Our job is to make our City attractive to that private enterprise, and we can do that best by creating a strong City infrastructure that supports growth, thriving business, and the environment.

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 do support tax abatements and incentives to spur economic growth. Tax abatements and incentives strengthen businesses locally, and many people prefer to spend their money locally. Businesses granted abatements or incentives hire people, thus reducing unemployment. There is actually increased tax revenue through the use of abatements and incentives. While the City temporarily forgoes a bit of revenue, the people hired by new businesses will spend their salaries in the local community. Sales and property taxes will increase as products are purchased and homes are built. So, even short-term, tax revenue can increase. A city can grow without raising taxes to fund the growth. Finally, tax receipts from businesses given incentives grow long-term after the abatement period ends.

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, transportation to name a few).

Ferrysburg already has consolidated police services with the County. I support some consolidation projects, but I would have to know all the facts about any single proposal prior to endorsing it. I do not like the idea of a community losing its unique character. I also believe that small government governs best, as it is most responsive to citizen input and desire. The

more we consolidate, the less control we have, and the less the people have to say about what happens in their corner of the world.

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?**

In some areas of the country, homeowners are paying about one-third of their income for housing. Renters pay an even higher percentage. Ferrysburg has a huge diversity in home costs – from mobile homes to lakefront mansions. Experts agree that supply is everything, but our small town really does not have a lot of land left to devote to housing. We will have to get creative in order to provide affordable housing that is close to area employers. Townhouses, duplexes, and courtyard apartments provide more affordable housing options than do single-family dwellings. Zoning ordinances can be reviewed and changed so that these options are viable choices for people seeking housing. We might consider reducing minimum lot sizes, and relaxing density restrictions in single-family home areas. As Mayor, it would be my duty to initiate discussions about these changes, as well as encourage investigation into other possible options. I would also facilitate the consistent and careful review and updating of our Master Plan. This can serve as an authoritative guide to overcoming challenges and barriers to growth, while ensuring the vision of a strong, viable Ferrysburg.

I believe we have a good transportation system that is improving through regional cooperation, and I think the qualified workers of today are educated, and savvy. They want good schools for their children, a safe community, and access to nature. As Mayor, it would be my role to secure and maintain these components through interaction with our citizens, with surrounding communities, and with our boards and commissions.

Environmental Policy

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

When greenspace is gone, it is gone forever. It does not follow that preservation of greenspace precludes economic growth and development. We can solve the problem by using the strengths of our location to attract business and industry. Growth can be tied to the availability of greenspace and our proximity to natural resources. Our location in beautiful west Michigan is a strength that can draw economic investment. We just must not put a parking lot in paradise. We must preserve our greenspace in order to maintain quality of life, now and in the future. I guarantee that the right pairing of business to environmental advocacy is possible and can be successful.

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?

I think this is one area where regional cooperation is appropriate. Our Harbor Transit service is a good example of this. Ferrysburg is represented on its board, and we have a dedicated tax that supports the service. Our participation in the West Michigan Regional Shoreline Development Commission also ensures cooperation in a greater area than just the Tri-Cities. Local and state government figures strongly in the development of today's non-motorized trail systems. We have an amazing bike path system in Ferrysburg. Government can legitimately be involved in seeking grants for non-motorized transportation systems, as well as initiating millage requests for same.

Please attach additional information regarding your community and business affiliations.