



Ottawa County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

District # 3 (Please insert your district number)

Name: Daniela R. Garcia

Employer: Pearson:

Email: votedanielagarcia@gmail.com

**Please note this is a fillable word document for your convenience.*

1. Why are you running for office?

Ottawa County is changing in size, and demographics as such so are the needs of the community. With this change, we need experienced and knowledgeable leaders on the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners who understand the role and responsibilities of government. I have previously worked with and supported the efforts of non-profit organizations, area businesses, and local and county government officials to address the needs of the community. Having a foundational understanding of the issues such as affordable housing, local mental health services, the importance of public safety is important in developing county policies and seeking solutions to address them.

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

Yes. I ran for State Representative in the then Michigan 90th House District (Holland, Holland Township, Hudsonville, Jamestown Township, Zeeland, and Zeeland Township) in 2014 and 2016. I won both elections with the support of our community and had the privilege to serve two terms in the Michigan House of Representatives. I also, unsuccessfully, ran in 2018 for the State Senate, however, I learned many lessons and considered it an honor to run for the position.

3. 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 over 19 years of public policy experience having worked for the U.S. House of Representatives, Association of Public and land-Grant Universities, Spectrum Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and currently at Pearson. In my work, I have worked collaboratively with stakeholders to advocate and create policies that benefit the communities I live in and represented. As a state representative, I served on the Appropriations, Commerce, Elections, and Health committees all of which had direct impacts on the county through public policy and funding. I was also committed to providing excellent constituent service by holding monthly office hours in the areas I represented (Holland, Holland Township, Hudsonville, Jamestown Township, Zeeland, and Zeeland Township), I attended community events such as festivals, summer cookouts, and even knocked doors in the off-election year to check in with constituents. All of these experiences helped me to serve our community well.

I will continue to collaborate and advocate for the community through conversations with stakeholders, seeking out information on county programs and services, asking questions about funding and budgets, and enacting policies that help Ottawa county grow and find solutions to challenges.

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

My top priorities if elected to serve as Ottawa County Commissioner are:

1. Supporting a safe community by funding public safety and programs that assist the residents of Ottawa County. We must support those who protect our community as well as the residents who live in our community.
2. Preserve local mental health services. For the last several years there has been a state effort to take control of local mental health services. I believe these services are best provided at the local level where collaboration between stakeholders has led to the development of regional programs that benefit Ottawa County.
3. Identify opportunities to address affordable housing with local units of government and the business community. There is a need for affordable housing in Ottawa County, to address this need the solution must come from multiple stakeholders such as area businesses, non-profits, and local units of government with support from the county.
4. Protect local decision-making. Often state government imposes mandates at the local and county level. It is important to advocate for local decision-making especially when current services, programs, and revenue streams will be impacted.
5. Maintain Ottawa County's strong financial position. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners and administration have made concerted efforts to make financially sound decisions which have resulted in the county being financially healthy. Maintaining financial health as well as the triple-A bond ratings are important for the long-term economic vitality of the county.
6. Good governance. The board must consider the well-being and needs of the residents of Ottawa County. The board should not make decisions based on their own personal interests but instead through the lens of its residents. Residents should also have an expectation that the board of commissioners is making and implementing sound policies, have an understanding of the limited role they have, are knowledgeable about the issues at the county level, and act ethically.

5. Ottawa is blessed with diverse economic sectors: agriculture, tourism, industrial and commercial. For each of these, what do you think are the issues they will encounter in the next 2 years? If elected, how will you support each of these sectors?

Agriculture

Ottawa County is the home to a rich agricultural community and is the third largest in agricultural products in the state. Farmland preservation will be important as farmers are retiring and acreage is being lost to development. There needs to be a balance of development and growth while working to preserve agricultural production in Ottawa County. Another area of concern is low water tables in

Ottawa County. I will work to support water sustainability programs to limit the impact on agriculture production.

Tourism

With so many visitors coming to West Michigan to enjoy all that it has to offer, maintaining local decision-making in rental properties will be important to the communities on the lakeshore. I have supported and will continue to support decisions made by local units of government concerning this issue. Supporting local festivals and regional events will continue to be important to the businesses and community where they take place. The positive economic impact these events have on our area communities is substantial and important to the vitality of the region.

Industrial and Commercial

The local business community is important to the overall economic health of Ottawa County. I would work with the local units of government and the business community as zoning decisions are being made at the municipal and township level. All stakeholders should work with the county to ensure the health, safety, and tax implications do not harm the residents of the community.

6. Safety for all citizens is a protection we expect. If elected, how will you ensure that the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department, Ottawa County Health Department and Ottawa County Court system equally and fairly provides safety to all residents?

The safety and well-being of every Ottawa county resident is of utmost importance to me. As a state representative, I worked with all of the Department heads mentioned in the question to ensure that the needs of residents were understood and prioritized in my work in the legislature. As a county commissioner, I would work with the Sheriff, Health Director, and the Courts to ensure that they are adequately funded and work to understand their issues concerning current and future program needs. I would continue the work I began at the state to ensure that school resource officers continue to partner with local school districts, advocate for the county mental health system to continue to provide local services, and support efforts of the court system to run diversion programs to assist county residents. Additionally, I am supportive of the Family Justice Center which will have a positive impact on residents in need.

7. Ottawa County is financially more secure than many other Michigan counties. This is due to previous boards and administrations wisely spending and saving revenues. If elected, what will be your spending priorities for county dollars?

Concerning the financial health of Ottawa County, I will evaluate the budget requests of the Department heads and seek out information to better understand how programs and services positively impact residents. I would work to maintain the two triple-A bond ratings which allow the county and the local units of government in the county to borrow at lower interest rates for capital projects. Additionally, I would work to ensure the county is fulfilling the reporting requirements and maintaining proper oversight of federal funds that have been appropriated through the ARPA funds.

8. Ottawa County is one of the fastest growing counties in Michigan, attracting people from many cultures, ethnicities, and lifestyles to support the growth of businesses throughout the county, if elected, how will you support diversity, inclusion and equity at the county level.

If elected to serve as a county commissioner I would support efforts to ensure all residents feel supported and provided services regardless of their background. As a community, it is important to demonstrate that these values are important as Ottawa County seeks to be a place “where you belong.”

If you have any endorsements, current or past community or business affiliations that you would like to share, please note below.

In this election, I am seeking individual community member endorsements such as Sheriff Steve Kempker. In previous state house elections, I earned the endorsements of both community members and state associations that worked closely with the state on issues of importance to their members.