



Ottawa County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

District # 1 (Please insert your district number)

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

1. Why are you running for office?

As a former educator and school administrator I have attempted to model and instilled in my students and my own children, an obligation of serving their community. Ottawa County is highly recognized and respected throughout Michigan as a model of good governance. Recently Ottawa County hired a new administrator and will soon hire a new deputy administrator, Ottawa County deserves and should expect an experienced, committed and collaborative board of commissioners that will assist and support the new administrative team in their efforts of keeping Ottawa County a thriving place where everyone can be proud of living, working and playing.

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

I was first elected to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners in 2016; I am seeking a fourth term. I proudly stand by my voting record as a fiscal conservative, common sense holistic decision maker, while practicing principles of good governance.

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

As Ottawa County Commissioner of District 1, I have served and chaired on numerous committees at the local, regional and national level. As a former Superintendent of Holland Public Schools responsible for the daily operation of the entire school district, I understand the importance of working with an open-minded and collaborative board. While every board member possesses a set of professional and personal skills, no board member is or can be an expert in every function necessary to run a county of nearly 300,000 residents. While part of our role is to question, seek for clarification and gather factual information, it's vital the Board trust our county staff and administrators to perform their jobs. A governing board must have a clear understanding of their role and authority parameters when making holistic decisions impacting the resident of Ottawa County.

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

A) Maintaining and enhancing our respected and highly recognized reputation of being an organization modeling principles of “good governance.” Some of these include, but are not limited to; protecting the constitutional right of its residents, responsive to immediate and long-term concerns, implementing effective and efficient practices, open and transparent communication with its residents, inclusive and equitable opportunities for everyone, being accountable, and remaining open to change when necessary.

B) Continue to support initiatives enhancing long-term economic, social and the environmental health of Ottawa County.

C) Currently Ottawa County is simultaneously addressing numerous critical issues: broadband coverage, water quality and availability, affordable housing and the recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce. Its important Ottawa County elects an experienced and solution oriented Board of Commissioners without disrupting the momentum and progress made on resolving these pending issues.

D) The decommissioning of the J.H. Campbell Consumer Power plant by 2025 will have a major impact on Ottawa County. The J. H. Campbell facility is the largest source of tax revenue for both Grand Haven Area Public School District and Port Sheldon Township, 28% of Port Sheldon’s tax base is currently dependent on the J.H. Campbell facility, which encompasses approximately 2,000 acres. The redevelopment of this property will be vital and have a long term impact for every resident of Ottawa County, along with Port Sheldon Township and the Grand Haven Area Public School District.

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 third largest agricultural producer in the state with revenue totaling over \$500,000,000 annually in products. Unfortunately since 2012 Ottawa County has lost 8% of its farmed acreage and 17% of its farms. Some farms and areas within the county have begun to experience groundwater shortages and quality. As county commissioner, I will continue to support our Farm Preservation and Groundwater Sustainability Initiatives to ensure we maintain this vital industry while also ensuring our residents and businesses have permanent and sustainable access to fresh water.

Tourism and parks go hand-in-hand in Ottawa County. Our parks are well known and admired throughout the Midwest. I will continue to support our Parks Department, while collaboratively working with our local municipalities and other agencies to ensure mutual benefits for every resident and municipality of the county.

Industrial and Commercial: The prosperity of our county’s industry and commercial partners are vital to the success of Ottawa County. The county and its local municipalities must collaborate together when zoning and environmental health issues are involved in the expansion or construction of new facilities and residential developments are being considered.

While every economic sector has their own unique challenges, there are common challenges among the sectors; the recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce, maintaining and balancing our growth while maintaining our West Michigan values, addressing our housing needs, and providing an environment where everyone is valued and welcomed at work and within their community.

I will continue to support and collaborate with our county staff, municipalities and local organizations, such as Lakeshore Advantage and local chambers of commerce, to ensure the prosperity of Ottawa County.

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

Every resident (including students) and visitor to Ottawa County should know his or her safety is a top priority for the Board of Commissioners and me. My voting record these past six years have demonstrated my commitment to supporting all agencies actively involved in the protection and assistance of our residents. As a county commissioner and resident of Ottawa County I am extremely proud of the Sheriff's Department, state law enforcement agencies, Health Department, Court System and the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners who collaboratively work to keep everyone safe. I will always advocate for the continuous and advance training our first responders in the pursuit of keeping everyone safe, including those who place their lives at risk everyday to protect our residents.

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?

Through the stewardship of the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners our residents benefit from the county's two Triple-A credit rating, allowing Ottawa County and its local units of government to borrow money for capital improvement projects with lower interest rates. Very few counties in Michigan have achieved this accomplishment. As a fiscal conservative, I will continue to prioritize projects and expenditures to improve the Ottawa County's organization and services for every resident. Every major expenditure and project proposed is thoroughly reviewed and dissected by department leadership, administrators, the financial officer, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Commissioners before approval.

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.

In 2018 I supported the establishment of the DEI office as an effort to recognize the importance in fulfilling the County's vision "Where You Belong." To achieve this vision and principle the county must proactively engage and understand a variety of perspectives across human differences. Our employees must be able to provide exceptional public services to residents of the fastest growing county in Michigan. Ottawa County's economic base depends on a worldwide business environment that requires a global workforce and customer base, allowing everyone to prosper.

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

Current Ottawa County Sherriff, Steve Kemper

Current Under Sherriff, Valerie Wiese

Former Ottawa County Sherriff, Gary Rozema

Right to Life of Michigan

Affiliations Currently Serving

Ottawa County Planning and Policy Committee

Ottawa County Talent and Recruitment Committee, Chair

West Michigan Airport Authority Board

Planning Committee for the Consumers Energy JH Campbell 2025 Decommissioning

Area Community Services Employment Training Council, Past Chair

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Michigan Association of Counties Finance Committee

National Association of Counties Steering Committee of Community, Economic and Workforce Development