

**The Chamber**

**Ottawa County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate for District # 7 , Georgetown Township**

**Name: Gregory A. Steigenga**

**Status: Retired**

**Email: steigengag@gmail.com**

**1. Why are you running for office?**

I have spent an entire career in public service and my passion is to continue that effort by trying to make a positive impact on Ottawa County government moving forward. I believe that I have the experience and the leadership skills to make a real difference for Ottawa County residents, visitors, businesses and schools here in our county. I also understand what commitment and dedication are as they apply to the position that I am seeking, and I look forward to being accountable to and trusted by everyone that I will be representing.

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

Yes, I have served as an elected City Commissioner in the City of Hudsonville for the past 6 years. A few months ago my wife and I moved outside of the city, so my role as a City Commissioner had to come to an end due to no longer being a resident there.

**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 had the opportunity to serve with the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office for 30 years prior to retiring from the department in 2015. My experience there included street level law enforcement duties, law enforcement supervision, and ultimately being appointed by then Sheriff Gary Rosema to the position of Undersheriff of the department. I served in that capacity for a period of 11 years prior to retiring. Subsequent to leaving the Sheriff's office, I worked as a

City Commissioner in the City of Hudsonville for a period of 6 years.

During my time with the Sheriff's Office and the City of Hudsonville, I was actively engaged in many aspects of public service that I believe has prepared me to successfully engage as a county commissioner here in our county.

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

I would advocate for maintaining the lower millage rates that Ottawa County is known for and at the same time continue to be a resource for our residents and our businesses. Safety and security matters would be on the forefront to allow for safe communities where business can thrive and residents and visitors can have that sense of security at all times. Infrastructure matters have to continue to be addressed through any federal/state grant fundings that we as a county can access. In addition, to maintain public services that are second to none to allow for smooth operational relationships with residents, business and schools throughout our county.

**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 in Ottawa County faces the challenge of diminishing land areas due to the ever increasing demand for development of land tracts by housing and other developers. In addition, their costs continue to escalate due to rising fuel, feed and equipment costs. I would advocate for reaching that balance of allowing for development and yet providing for maintaining agricultural areas that are adequate for the agricultural efforts in our county. In addition, we should continue to advocate for federal and state dollars to assist our agricultural operations in any way we can.

Tourism is very important to us as a county and many of our businesses have come to rely on a portion of their sales being attributed directly to tourism. I would advocate that the county continue to maintain an excellent park system in all aspects and to keep our beaches, rivers and lakes well maintained and safe to allow for a desired destination for all visitors.

Industrial and commercial continue to be a mainstay for Ottawa County. Our commercial community is second to none and continues to provide for the day to day needs and desires of our residents along with being a very strong drawing card for people and entities from outside of our county. Both of these sectors are being faced with rising costs along with challenges in finding adequate numbers of employees to provide services and/or to produce their particular products. We must seek solutions to controlling some of these costs to the

extent that we can as well as to advocate for solutions to the growing concerns about lack of workers. As a county, we must continue to provide the necessary services locally through the various county departments and also work hard with our state and federal partners in securing grant funding and related programs that can assist our business 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 our residents?**

I had the opportunity to work with the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office for 30 years, prior to retiring from the department in 2015. During my career there, I served as the Undersheriff for many years and was responsible for making sure that the services the department was providing were more than adequate to provide for the best possible security for our residents, businesses and schools here in Ottawa County. In addition, while serving as Undersheriff, I worked very closely with our Health Department and our court systems in an ongoing effort to ensure that the services from these agencies were administered in a fair and equal manner. If elected as a Commissioner, I would utilize my experience in these areas to ensure that safety remains a priority for our jurisdiction in all aspects.

**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?**

I am a conservative and one of the many things that I respect our county board for is that they have done a very good job in keeping the county financially healthy. I would work hard to maintain this type of approach to how we spend money and at the same time, make sure that we continue to provide the level of services that our residents have come to expect. Safety and security matters would continue to be one of my priorities along with ensuring that our county departments provide the best possible services to our residents.

**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.**

Ottawa County continues to be a place where people want to live and where business and industry want to establish themselves. There are many reasons for this, and I have already cited some of those reasons in this questionnaire, however, I believe it is very important to be a

welcoming community to allow for interactions and relationships that allow for business to thrive here. This includes people from many cultures and backgrounds. It is important for Ottawa to support diversity and inclusion and I would work to support that endeavor.

**Endorsements for Gregory Steigenga:**

**Sheriff Gary A. Rosema, Ottawa County Sheriff, retired.**

**Sheriff Steven Kempker**

**Mayor Mark Northrup, Mayor, City of Hudsonville**

**James Holtvluwer, retiring County Commissioner, Ottawa County**