



## Ottawa County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

### District # 11 (Please insert your district number)

Name: Matthew Fenske  
Employer: Ottawa County Michigan  
Email: Fenske.matt@yahoo.com

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

1. Why are you running for office? I believe in preserving the integrity of Ottawa County, while laying a foundation for future growth. As a fiscal conservative, I have years of setting governance and policies for townships and municipalities. I lead with common sense and integrity. I believe in bringing people to the table to continue Ottawa County's economic growth and vibrance.
2. Have you ever run for political office before? If yes, please explain. I've been a public servant in Ottawa County since 1992. In this role, I have served on Zoning Boards, Planning Commissions, elected as a Township Trustee in Tallmadge Township and currently serving my 5<sup>th</sup> two-year term as an Ottawa County Commissioner. I presently serve as Chair of the Board of Commissioners.
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 a broad understanding of all aspects of County Government as an elected official. My 33-year professional career included Probation Officer, Deputy Court Administrator and Superintendent of 100 bed Juvenile Detention Center. I have extensive experience in collaborating with Foundations, Not for Profit Organizations, small and large businesses and especially the farming community in my district. I possess a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University and a Masters degree in Counseling and Personnel.
4. If elected, what would be your top priorities and why?  
Safety and security in our County are my top priority. A community needs a basic sense of safety to thrive. I support funding and training for the Ottawa County Sheriff's department.  
Another top priority is supporting our County's Motto "Where You Belong" resulting in an environment that is welcoming, fair and respectful. I believe our county's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion department enhances our economic sustainability and attracts young professionals who require this from their employer.  
Affordable Housing is a priority in our County and I support using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act for this initiative. There's a huge void in affordable housing for potential employees, seniors and young professionals wanting to live in our county.  
I would make sure our taxes remain low. Presently, Ottawa County has the sixth lowest tax rate in the State and I never voted to increase taxes.  
Preserving individual rights and traditional American family values is a top priority along with supporting Right to Life and the Second Amendment.  
Ottawa County is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest agricultural producer in the State. This would continue to be a priority of mine, preserving our farm land, rural character and ground water resources because if we abuse it now, our future children will suffer.

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 needs to be preserved and balances with proper zoning and local master planning. I currently chair the Agricultural Preservation Board and will continue to assist farmers in preserving them to perpetuity. Tourism is booming in Ottawa County as a destination. I will support the Ottawa County Recreation and Parks Department and will ensure proper funding is used to maintain our previous natural resources. I serve on the State of Michigan Agriculture and Tourism Committee that provides support to local counties. This includes lobbying our state legislature to make policies or enhance laws for the benefit of tourism demands. The Industrial and commercial environment is challenging. Their current issue is finding a workforce that needs affordable housing, competitive wages and training. Good schools, safety, leisure activities and a faith-based community provide an atmosphere that is attractive to potential workers. I continue to support these initiatives. I would also support tax incentives to businesses, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Brownfield Development zones where appropriate.
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? Safety is my number 1 priority. They must have adequate funding and training. I meet with the County Sheriff weekly in my role as Board Chair and I'm a member of the Emergency Management Team resulting in a highly collaborative team to provide services to our county residents. A caring community provides health and human services to all residents. Adequate Funding is a necessity and a safety net for basic needs. Services that include dental, vision and childhood immunizations along with environmental health and food service. I foster grants from local, state and federal organizations that provide sustainable funding to many of our childhood programs including the Miles of 'Smiles mobile dental program. As a commissioner, I actively support all of these safety measures through my voting record. The Ottawa County Court System will be enhanced as the new Family Justice Center is completed. Probate Court, Friend of the Court and other related offices and courts under one roof to provide coordinated and centralized services to residents fairly and equally. I'm a member of the Ottawa County Community Correction Advisory committee whose goal is to improve services in probation, parole and corrections. I'm a strong supporter of the Office of the Public Defender for Ottawa County. I work with this office to ensure the system is fair, cost-effective while simultaneously protecting public safety and accountability.
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'm fiscally conservative and have a broad understanding of all aspects of County government. County millages are important including the County Mental Health Department. I currently chair this Board and will continue to support this vulnerable sector in our County. Another spending priority would be our 911 central dispatch and our Emergency Management Department. The Sheriff Department is an integral partner in our community. It's one of the most visible and highly managed departments. There is a definite need to build up Broadband in the areas that are underserved. Federal and state funding will assist in the near term along with county dollars. Ground water preservation is also an issue as the growth in Ottawa County continues at its present rate.
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.
- I have always and will continue to support all efforts to maintain diversity, equity and inclusion in our community. I collaborate with local business leaders, faith-based organizations and not for profit organizations that support and recognize the value of DEI. Since the 1970's Ottawa County has been a welcoming community to faith-based immigration and seasonal farmworkers. This diversity enhances our community in many ways. I will continue to advocate for valuable training, leadership and collaboration outreach that our county's DE & I department upholds to

make Ottawa County welcoming, fair and respectful. I communicate often with Robyn Afrik, director of Ottawa County's DE&I department and join her at face to face meetings with stakeholders, township and municipal leaders and businesses who want her expertise in dealing with this important aspect of our community.

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

**“Matt Fenske has proven himself to be a true servant of the people. He is consistently accessible and responsive. He puts in the hard work and time to address the needs of his community.**

*”Roger Victory / Hudsonville*

*Michigan State Senator, District 30*

**“Matt has experience, knowledge and understands county government which is vital to his position. Matt supports high quality public safety service ensuring a safe community. Matt is the right choice for county commissioner.**

*”Steve Kempker / Holland*

*Sheriff, Ottawa County Sheriff's Department*

**“Matt is the face of Ottawa County government because of his character and work ethic. His ability to bring people together to ensure representation of the different segments of our county yields the best results for the citizens. He's the right choice for many reasons.**

*”Jose Gomez / Coopersville*

*Former Coopersville Public Schools and Ottawa County ISD boards of education member*

**“I am happy to endorse Matt Fenske for re-election to the Board of Commissioners. I've worked with Matt for many years and found him to be a dedicated public servant. He takes the time to listen to his constituents and has proved to be pro-public safety.**

*”Mark Bennett / Tallmadge Township*

*Supervisor, Tallmadge Township;*

*Retired captain, Ottawa County Sheriff's Department*

**“Matt realizes the importance of agriculture in Ottawa County. His service on the Agricultural Preservation Board as well as his attendance at the various farm meetings (Farm Bureau etc.) shows this. He always has an ear and communicates well with farmers and others.**

*”Merle Langeland / Georgetown Township*

*Owner and President, Langeland Farms*

**“I have known Matt for years as a friend and fellow board member. Matt understands the need to keep us safe and economically strong. He's a man of his word and is well respected by people across the County. As a public servant, Matt is engaged with his constituents and seeks their input. I believe Matt is the most qualified candidate for Ottawa County Commissioner, District 11.”**

*Cliff Meeuwsen / Zeeland*

*President, Zeeland Farm Services*

**“As County Commissioner for District 11, I have always appreciated Matt Fenske's leadership and position. As the fastest growing county in the State of Michigan, it takes good leadership navigating issues of growth while protecting our way of life. Thank you for your leadership.**

*”Ed Hanenburg / Coopersville*

*President and Owner, River Ridge Farms*

**“Matt is very informative speaking at local township meetings. It is very obvious Matt takes a lot of pride in retaining and distributing information from the county level to our local communities.**

*”Mike Gavin / Wright Township, Owner Gavin Orchards and Produce*

*Past Endorsements: Right to Life*

*I’m a charter member of the Coopersville Kiwanis*

*I’m a 16 year member of the American Legion Neal Fonger Post 179*

*Past board member of several, local not for profit organizations*