



## Ottawa County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

### District #10

Name: Roger A Bergman

Employer: Borr's Shoes & Ottawa County

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

1. Why are you running for office?

Ottawa County is one of the best, if not the best run county in Michigan. I would like to help maintain that reputation. I along with my fellow commissioners work hard to maintain a balance of quality living along with low tax rates. I feel strongly that our motto of "Where you belong" is more important today than ever before and I want to make sure that we not only say it but mean it.

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

Since 1999 I have served the citizens of NW Ottawa county first on the Grand Haven city council for 12 years, the last 8 years as mayor. Since then I have served on the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners for the last ten years with the last two serving as chair of the commission.

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

In the last twenty-two years I have worked with and learned from many leaders in our community as well as leaders on the state and federal levels. As a commissioner I have served on a variety of committees that deal with issues of road funding, farmland preservation, conservation issues, funding for major infrastructure projects to name just a few. This work has given to me an ability to look at all of these issues with a better understanding of what it takes to make sure that Ottawa county is able to get our fair share of available dollars.

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

We are a county with much to be thankful for. First of all I want to make sure that "Where You Belong" doesn't apply to just a few but to all. As county employees we need to set an example and treat all of our customers/citizens equally with respect and dignity. In addition we need to make sure that we take care of our environment. That to me means making sure we preserve our farmlands, our water supply, our parks, as well as the many other assets that we all enjoy and sometimes take for granted. As a county we are viewed by commissioners from other counties as the best run county in the state. We have one of the lowest tax rates, we have one of the highest credit ratings, the best park system, and I along with the current board want to keep that reputation.

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?

We in Ottawa County are either the top producer of agricultural or close to the top. We need to continue our efforts to permanently protect some of our farmland for future generations. We as commissioners have worked with our parks board to make our park system one of the best in the state and region. We need to continue that work along with working with the road commission providing for the extra bike path alongside some of our scenic routes in the county. Tourism in the future may take many different paths and we need to look for ways to provide for all of these. Both industry and commercial interests thrive in an environment that is inclusive and free of barriers. As a county we are working with our employees to make sure they set an example of what it means to be welcoming to all in our workplaces. As more citizens see Ottawa county as a place they want to work, live and play we will realize what they can bring in terms of job skills for our industry as well as our commercial interests.

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?

As commissioners we have hired a DE & I director and one of her goals is provide leadership and training for all of our employees, from the sheriff officers to the parole officers, from the health care nurses to the jail employees, in other words all employees. This training is to help each of them to set aside any biases they may have to provide equal services to all. As a county we are also providing this kind of training for our cities and townships when requested.

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?

Having served on the finance committee for almost ten years I have been able to see and appreciate how department heads make sure that any new spending proposal they send to finance is carefully researched before asking. If elected I would continue to make sure the financing of our new Family Justice Center, is cost effective. I would also continue to find ways to compensate our employees fairly in the short term as well as long term because I believe that our employees are one of our greatest assets. In addition I feel it is important to long at the long term needs of the county and always be prepared for the "what ifs"

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 supported and will continue to support our efforts to not only help our employees in their understanding of what "*where you belong*" means but in doing so setting an example for our county as a whole. Because I serve as a commissioner I have already come to appreciate how this program has changed some of my own personal biases. I also admit that I have much to learn from others around me and look forward to working at the county with people from different backgrounds.

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

I have been in retail for almost 56 years, first in sales then ownership and then just a few hours a week doing their books. In addition I have held many different offices in merchant organizations, chambers, church boards and for the last 22 years been involved in politics.

Here is what some folks have said about me.

Monica Verplank:

*It was a pleasure to serve on the Ottawa County Administrator search committee with Roger Bergman. His understanding of the scope of needs of county residents, along with his ability to listen, learn and represent those needs was impressive. Roger leads with integrity, humility, and a great ear for the voices of county residents.*

John Nash:

*In the 17 years, I have been the Spring Lake Township Supervisor, Roger Bergman has always been ready and willing to help.*

Rev Dr Jared C Cramer:

*Roger Bergman had devoted two decades of his life to making our community a better place to live for all people, transcending par san poli cs with a focus on the good of the whole.*

Field Reichadt

*I have known Roger for more than 40 years. We were both young, struggling retailers in downtown Grand Haven. He succeeded. I did not. He has always been thoughtful, fair, honest, open-minded... but above all, as a public servant, he has done exceptional things to make life better for all Ottawa County people – not just a few! I would classify him as a “Jerry Ford Republican.” Now, he is facing opposition from people on the extreme right. He deserves the support of all of us.*