

Phil Marsh

October 1, 2021

Muskegon County Conservative Women's Caucus
PO BOX 266
Montague, MI 49437



Muskegon County Conservative Women's Caucus

Dear Candidate

I serve on the Muskegon County Conservative Women's Caucus and we are asking that you complete the questions below and return at your earliest convenience. We will be placing the questions and your answers on our website: www.muskegonconservativewomen.org for the public to review before the November 2, 2021 Election.

We would appreciate your cooperation in completing these questions by either sending them to the PO BOX listed above or email to karolynr@muskegonconservativewomen.org.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Karolyn Rillema, Vice President
Elections Committee - MCCWC

1. What makes you stand out from the other candidate (s)?

I have the exclusive endorsement of Michigan Right To Life.
I have not been in political office before and realize that
I need to participate in citizen government.

2. What's the one issue you plan to address?

Stopping Critical Race Theory from being taught in our
school system and local government.

3. What do you hope to accomplish as a Mayor or City Council Member?

To make sure every person's concerns are addressed fully.

4. How have you already been volunteering or serving in the city?

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5. If you are not elected, what would you do to try to help work on ideas or issues that are important to you? And if you are elected, how will you solicit input from community members?

To work with and support candidates who share my values.
If elected I would encourage a community committee of concerned
individuals to get input on community concerns.

6. When you hear about something that concerns you in the city, what steps would you take to see that this concern is resolved?

Bring it up before the City Manager and legal counsel
to define the legal basis to address citizen concerns.

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Dear Candidate :

I received your list of questions in the mail today and am responding via this email.

1. My formal education and professional and personal experience make me stand out. I have a BA in Political Science from Kalamazoo College and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Western Michigan University (the same degree held by most City Managers). Previously, I was employed as the Assistant Planning and Grants Director at Ottawa County. I have owned my own insurance agency since 2004. My MPA and experience working in local government provides me with tremendous insight into the policies and procedures of local government and allows me knowledge to apply oversight that is unmatched. My extensive business experience (my wife Angie also owns a business: Wasserman's Flowers) gives me the ability to apply tried and true private sector principles to government that help to eliminate wasteful spending, focus on service to residents, and eliminate unnecessary rules and regulations.
2. I will continue to focus on the fiscal health of the City of Norton Shores. Since being first elected, I have worked to eliminate burdensome pension plans and replace them with private sector style defined contribution plans. All new city hires since 2017 are no longer eligible for pension plans. This drastically reduced our legacy costs and has put the city on a path to have all pension liabilities paid off by 2032. We have also reduced our OPEB (retiree health obligations) liabilities from \$40 million to \$13 million by changing health plans, increasing co-pays, and no longer offering retiree health insurance to new hires since 2017.
3. I hope to continue to accomplish my goals of improving the overall fiscal health of the city, maintaining and improving our roads, maintaining and improving our park system, and continuing to attract new residential, commercial and industrial development.
4. I was first elected Mayor in 2009 and was re-elected in 2013 and 2017. I am also a member of the Michigan Association of Mayors which provides invaluable information to me.
5. If not elected, I will do what I did prior to becoming Mayor: I will advocate with the elected officials and staff to share my ideas and concerns.

I feel it is vitally important for any Mayor to be available and approachable to all residents to hear their concerns and ideas. Just like I have done from the first month I was elected in 2009, I will continue to have open office hours at City Hall so that residents can come to see me. I currently have these hours Monday and Friday 2-4pm and 9-11 on Wednesdays. My ability to have a flexible schedule as a business owner and having my business only 5 minutes from City Hall has been invaluable during my term as Mayor.

6. As Mayor, when I hear about something that concerns me in the city, I communicate with the relevant City staff person (from the City Manager on down) and my fellow council members. I am a strong believer in thorough communication and action plans to make sure these concerns are resolved quickly and efficiently.

Thank you for the opportunity to answer these questions.

Mayor Gary Nelund

October 8, 2021

**Muskegon County Conservative Women's Caucus 2021 Candidate
Questionnaire**

1. What makes you stand out from other candidates?

My experience. I have served on the city council since being appointed to a partial term in 2016 and am seeking my second four-year term. I am recently retired from Consumers Energy and able to devote more time and energy to our citizens and the important issues facing them. As a former newspaper reporter covering local government, and working with local leaders in a 20-year career in public affairs at Consumers Energy, I have a solid understanding of how local government works to serve its citizens.

2. What's the one issue you plan to address?

A dedicated non-pedestrian pathway connecting two of our community's natural treasures, the city's Lake Harbor Park and P.J. Hoffmaster State Park. I have supported the city's plan to use \$1 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward this important project.

3. What do you hope to accomplish as a Norton Shores City Council member?

I have identified three top priorities if re-elected Nov. 2:

- a. Continued implementation of the city's Seminole Place Plan, which has already resulted in the demolition of the long-vacant Kmart building and streetscape improvements now underway along Seminole Road. This is a gateway to our city and must be a welcoming and inviting corridor to both residents and visitors.
- b. Continued stewardship of our citizen's tax dollars, especially our dedicated millage levies to maintain and improve our city's streets and our police and fire departments. I will continue to work with city staff and my fellow council members to ensure informed decisions are made when investing these resources.
- c. Work closely with Muskegon County officials on the development of Dune Harbor Park on the former Nugent Sand property in the city's northwest corner. Also initiate other projects to improve barrier-free access to our city's outdoor beauty, including, as mentioned above, a

dedicated non-motorized pathway from Lake Harbor Park south to P.J. Hoffmaster State Park and, eventually, east along Pontaluna Road to link to nearby Fruitport and Spring Lake area trails.

4. How have you already been volunteering or serving in the city?

Appointed to the city council in July 2016; elected to a four-year term in 2017 and now seeking a second four-year term. Former member of the city's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority board.

5. If you are not elected, what would you do to try and help work on ideas that are important to you? And if you are elected, how will you solicit input from community members?

I fully anticipate being reelected, but if I am not longer on the city council, I will remain an active citizen, attending city meetings and participating in making Norton Shores a better place to live, work and play.

Assuming I continue to serve on the city council, I always want to hear from citizens via e-mail, roger@nortonshores.org, phone, 231-747-0940 or by contacting me via social media or through the city's website and Facebook page.

6. When you hear about something that concerns you in the city, what steps would you take to see that this concern is resolved?

As a council member, we have an established process of contacting city Administrator Mark Meyers and Mayor Gary Nelund with any citizen concerns brought to our attention. Mr. Meyers then pulls in necessary city staff, as needed, to address and resolve citizens' concerns. This process has proven efficient and successful.