



Being an Educated Voter for the 2021 Elections

Election Day is Tuesday, November 2nd. While the Livonia PTSA Council does not endorse political candidates, we do strongly encourage participation in elections. Our goal is to share information to help our members be a more educated voter.

Remember to vote on or before November 2nd

Livonia City Council

For the Livonia City Council Election, there are 4 open seats for the voters to decide. The top 3 vote getters will win 4-year terms, 4th place will win a 2-year term, and the candidate with the most votes will be the City Council President (and Mayor Pro Tem) for 2 years.

There are 7 candidates running:

- Carrie Budzinski: <https://www.facebook.com/CarrieBudzinskiLivonia>
- Dan Centers: <https://www.facebook.com/CentersforLivonia>
- Rob Donovic (I): <https://www.facebook.com/RobForLivonia>
- Jim Jolly (I): <https://www.facebook.com/ElectJimJolly>
- Scott Morgan: <https://www.facebook.com/morgan4livonia>
- Ken Overwater: <https://www.facebook.com/KenForLivonia>
- Laura Toy (I): <https://www.facebook.com/lauratoylivonia>

Livonia City Council Candidate Questions

City Council Members are in a position to advocate for the schools in our community, which is what the Livonia PTSA Council strives to do. Our National PTA mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

While City Council does not have direct oversight of our schools, as community leaders, City Council can work together with our schools to build a stronger community. We asked the candidates a list of questions regarding their thoughts and ideas on issues related to the schools in our community. All of the candidates replied. We would like to thank the candidates for taking

their time to reply to these questions. The responses from the candidates are compiled below and are available at this link

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BONoxvKWPPBY1ZZF9_mFCZPQffvW2d5q/view?usp=sharing

Questions & Answers - Livonia City Council Candidates 2021:

1. Are you, or have you ever been a member of a PTA?

Carrie Budzinski:

My oldest just started kindergarten at Niji-Iro and I joined the PTA.

Dan Centers:

As a former classroom teacher and a school board member I have been a member of many school-PTA groups. I know firsthand that our Livonia PTA units are a tremendous benefit to our students and schools.

Rob Donovic:

No, I have not.

Jim Jolly:

Yes, I have been a member of the PTA at Hoover since my oldest was in kindergarten in 2016-2017. My family's experience with the PTA and schools has been wonderful and we very much appreciate the time and effort that go into making our schools successful.

Scott Morgan:

No. We volunteered, my wife was much more active than I was as she did lunch duty, secret santa, library days and was active with the reading program for several years.

Ken Overwater:

No, my daughter is only 2.

Laura Toy:

Yes, I am a current member and have also been a member in the past.

2. Do you have any ideas on how the City of Livonia can support our schools and what would you do as a Council Member to support or promote these ideas?

Carrie Budzinski:

I think the City of Livonia can do a better job of promoting our schools, students, programs and staff. Our schools are a city asset that attract people to our community and should be treated as such. If I'm elected to Council I would like to share announcements about the great activities happening in our schools (both Livonia and Clarenceville) during opening comments. I would also reach out to the Social Studies Departments in high school and middle school to learn what they would like to see done to help engage students in local government (i.e. field trips, service hours, presentations, workshops).

Dan Centers:

The City of Livonia plays an important role in supporting our schools. One way is clearing our streets during times of snow and ice so that they are passable for busses and commuters. The city and the district also work together to provide school safety officers and other safety measures. Additionally, the city has an agreement with the school district to maintain the city buses. However, I would like to examine more areas of collaboration including Parks and Recreation, property maintenance, and connecting the business community with students to provide career development opportunities.

Rob Donovic:

Strengthening the partnership between the two governing bodies is important, often, residents do not know there is a separation in powers, but there's overlapping situations that one another can work together so we can serve residents and parents with schoolboard issues alike.

Jim Jolly:

There is no doubt the city and our school districts are in a symbiotic relationship and we rely on each other for our successes in building a great community. Real partnership in areas of shared interest is key to the success of our community. Dialogue is always the beginning of strengthening a relationship. I would like to start with having shared meetings to discuss the goals we each have for our community.

Scott Morgan:

The strength of Livonia's schools has always been important to the strength of Livonia, and from the beginning, our community was literally designed to promote this relationship. The best thing our city can do for the schools is continue to provide a safe and affordable community that attracts new generations of families. I also appreciate the way Council has respected the intent of our School Board in redeveloping land that LPS has sold to developers. Beyond that, I'm proud of all the ways our city works with our schools: providing police officers, crossing guards, field trip opportunities at Greenmead and library programs, etc.

Ken Overwater:

Livonia's School Board handles the school system, but I would stand in solidarity with school board in all policies that support our teachers, students, and parents. I believe that it is in the best interest of everyone in the community to ensure our public schools are strong and children receive the best education possible. The city can help ensure that all residents feel welcomed and safe sending their children to our public schools, and helping to support parents in getting their children to and from school. Partnering with schools to build coalitions with other stakeholders to provide opportunity to our students of all ages is where I think our elected City leaders can fill an important role.

Laura Toy:

I think it is so important to partner with our schools, they are one of our great assets that draw many young families to our community. I've met with both Livonia colleges and our K-12 schools many times as both a Council Member and when I was President. I've helped to organize several roundtables to have discussions on policy and how we can better partner with our schools.

3. Do you have any ideas on how the City of Livonia can partner with our schools to support Livonia's Vision 21 and what would you do as a Council Member to support or promote these ideas?

Carrie Budzinski:

Sustainable living plays a key role in Vision21 and there are a lot of opportunities to introduce students to the city's recycling programs to help them understand early in life how to protect the planet. I would love to see a collaboration between the city and the schools to help inform students and families about services available in the city. D.A.R.E. was an impactful program when I was a kid, perhaps we could create something similar with representatives from the Department of Public Works and/or the Greenleaf Commission.

Dan Centers:

I think that having LPS leadership part of steering committees is vitally important. Livonia's moto is "Families First" and our schools intimately know the needs of our families. Having the LPS leadership involved will also help identify areas of coordination between the district and the city.

Rob Donovic:

Communicating on future developments that are near schools, or properties that the schoolboard chooses to sell. It's productive when both bodies communicate to future land use owners what we as a community envision the future land use will be.

Jim Jolly:

Vision 21 is currently an exciting plan, but it will soon be turning into a larger community conversation about what features of it to implement and how we get there. There are several focus areas identified in Vision 21 including the city campus at 5 Mile and Farmington roads. This has the potential to be an engaging area that could function as a 21st century "downtown" engagement zone. The Livonia Public Schools own property in that area in the district offices and bus yard. We all need to be open minded when we look at future use of city and school property on both sides of Farmington Rd. I am also interested in exploring a shared building and resources if possible for city hall and school admin, this approach was done a few years ago in Dearborn and could do away with redundancies. Another focus area in Vision 21 is 7 Mile and Middlebelt close to the Clarenceville campus with equally exciting possibilities.

Scott Morgan:

Vision 21 offers some exciting opportunities for our community, and I look forward to working with residents, business owners, and investors to develop plans consistent with that vision. One focus area of Vision 21 is the City Center, which includes LPS central office. It's going to be important that we communicate openly with the LPS administration to ensure alignment on that plan.

Ken Overwater:

There are a number of ways that the city and the schools can partner to support Vision 21. Generally, the city and schools can communicate and rely on the institutional knowledge and experience of our teachers, students, and parents. More specifically, the City can make the most intelligent use of school real estate to the greatest benefit of the school system. Additionally, the creation of bike paths and nature trails can provide students with safe means to walk or bike to school. As a council member, I would work with the school board, teachers, parents and students to support the Vision 21 plan.

Laura Toy:

Our schools and particularly Livonia Public Schools have a huge role to play as they are the owner of some of the last available developable property in our city. We need to work together to ensure that whatever we do with these properties fits with the surrounding neighborhoods and fills the right needs for our city.

4. In recent years, Livonia Public Schools had a Bond, Sinking Fund, and Operating Millage approved by the voters. The Wayne RESA Enhancement Millage was also approved by the voters of Livonia and Wayne County overall. How do you feel about these ballot initiatives and did you support them?

Carrie Budzinski:

I supported the recent ballot initiative and I'm glad it passed. We need to invest in our schools, students and teachers.

Dan Centers:

I endorsed all these ballot measures listed. They are an important part of keeping our schools great places for students to learn.

Rob Donovic:

I have supported LPS mileages in the past, buildings and education cost money, and we as a community need to help mold the minds of tomorrow. But we also need to be fiscally responsible and understand many residents are on fixed incomes. Continuing to increase taxes on taxpayers is not sustainable, especially when goods continue to get more expensive for homeowners. Residents can only afford to pay so much money, so we need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Jim Jolly:

I did personally support each of these initiatives because they created better opportunities for our students and I publicly endorsed each of them as a city councilman. I have 3 children enrolled in the Livonia Public Schools and they have had a great education and experience. I want my children and their peers across Livonia to have great opportunities and well maintained facilities.

Scott Morgan:

I have always supported our school systems in Livonia, however the Wayne RESA Enhancement Millage was the hardest by far to support as we do not keep all of the funds collected within our Livonia Schools.

Ken Overwater:

I do support them. Educating our children is the most important function a government provides, and our schools and teachers must be well funded to ensure that we continue to live in an educated society.

Laura Toy:

I don't recall each specific millage, but have been generally supportive of our school millages. I support the ballot process to give our voters and taxpayers a voice on these types of proposals and funding mechanisms for our schools.

5. It has been more than 25 years since Proposal A was passed by the voters. What changes would you propose to address some of the challenges Proposal A has possibly created?

Carrie Budzinski:

I don't know how the city could address the challenges that resulted from Proposal A but I am happy to participate in conversations, meetings or workshops to brainstorm and work to implement ideas.

Dan Centers:

The Michigan School Finance Research Collaborative is a group of school and community leaders who have proposed alternative ways to fund our schools based on need instead of a flat per pupil contribution. For instance, students with special needs and English language needs have additional costs to educate. Additionally, we are under-funding our schools by about \$1,000 per pupil on average. I will continue to advocate for additional revenue in the state budget for our K-12 schools.

Rob Donovic:

Proposal A was passed by Michigan voters, changing how schools were funded, by a per pupil funding and lowered property taxes for homeowners across the state. State lawmakers and governors have gone back and forth about changes, so I look forward to those proposals as a voter, but ultimately, this is a state policy issue.

Jim Jolly:

Prop A is difficult from a city and schools perspective because it can adversely affect the tax base suddenly and leave us scrambling to make up the lost funds. When we have new developments in the city the schools should benefit from the increase in tax base and that's why I have been very hesitant to support brownfield redevelopments that take taxes from an increased tax base to offset the costs of new developments therefore depriving the increase in tax base to our community for 10-30 years. There are examples where brownfields are worth this

arrangement to clean up a polluted situation that otherwise would not be addressed, but others are more tenuous and in those cases I have voted no so that our community shares benefits from these investments.

Scott Morgan:

Perhaps the biggest challenge resulting from Proposal A is the slow pace at which tax revenues recover after a major economic slowdown like what we saw in 2008. There may be some tweaks that would address that issue, but it's important for us to remember that our taxpayers are hurting during those economic slowdowns, too. Overall, it's important for us to operate our city as efficiently as possible so we can meet our priorities regardless of the current economic climate. Fortunately, our city has set new revenue records for at least the last six years even with Proposal A. This is the best time to be disciplined with what we do with that money so we're ready for the next downturn.

Ken Overwater:

A one size fits all approach often creates as many problems as it solves. Proposal A prevents Livonia from investing more money in the classroom, while also forcing us to pay multiple mills to maintain and upgrade our school buildings. Our most important educational resource is our teachers, and I would support changes to Proposal A that allow Livonia to ensure that our mills do not only support the buildings where our students learn, but the teachers who actually educate our children.

Laura Toy:

Proposal A was approved by voters to limit unsustainable increases in property taxes which were driving people and particularly seniors out of their homes. I think any proposed changes would need to be well-defined and the need presented to voters.

6. In recent years, there have been several new housing developments on former LPS properties. What would you like to see happen with the remaining LPS sites that are vacant?

Carrie Budzinski:

I would like to see greenspace preserved when possible; however, I will always give proposals for development fair consideration and make decisions based on feedback from the community.

Dan Centers:

Recent development of vacant school properties with single family homes made a lot of sense for the community and the district. The district was able to use funds from the sale to advance district priorities and reduce maintenance costs. Additionally, the city was able to gain needed housing stock. However, there is a limit to the number of properties that the district should part with. The district should maintain control over some properties in case there is ever a need to add schools in the future. At this time, there does not appear to be a need in the next decade or longer. However, it is impossible to know what Livonia's future population may look like.

Rob Donovic:

Commercial markets and consumer trends have changed since our community founders designed Livonia. Whether we like it or not, people shop differently than they did 5, 10, or 30 years ago, we as a community must adapt and plan with these changes. Housing needs continue to grow in Livonia, people want different housing options in Livonia, so I support building homes, so new young families can move into those homes and attend our schools.

Jim Jolly:

Development of former school sites should be more of a collaborative effort. The way this has worked is that the schools enter into a contract to sell former school sites with a developer and then the issue comes to the city through the planning commission and city council to approve how to use the land. I would appreciate more grassroots conversations taking place earlier in the process that include residents in the area of the schools and other interested parties. I accept that the schools do not need all the facilities and that the city needs housing, but I also always hate to see the loss of green space. There has to be other options for consideration.

Scott Morgan:

I believe it is up to the LPS School Administration and the School Board to decide if their unused property will be needed in the future. With sites that may go up for sale in the future I will advocate for what I think is in our community's best interest and need at that time.

Ken Overwater:

I believe in a neighborhood focused approach and in making decisions that do the most good for the most people. To that end, I want to see the remaining vacant LPS sites developed into whatever would benefit the local neighborhood most. It may be a park, or housing, or retail and restaurant space. My opinion as to what would be best is of little value; I want to know what local residents think would be best.

Laura Toy:

Because of their locations primarily within neighborhoods, I believe housing does seem to make the best sense in most cases. We have also incorporated green space and recreational areas in some of these developments.

(end)

Livonia City Council Candidate Forums

There have been 2 Candidate Forums in recent weeks – videos are posted online as follows:

The League of Women Voters (held on 9/16 via Zoom)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6vPEQhSC5o>

The Livonia Chamber of Commerce (held in-person on 9/30)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qkyk4VNEzVQ>

The Livonia Observer also asked questions to the candidates

https://www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/livonia/2021/10/05/livonia-election-2021-city-council-candidates-talk-council-candidates-break-down-platforms-ahead-ele/5843964001/?utm_campaign=snd-autopilot&fbclid=IwAR3PcUiOZbqDLPsQRNMHc6Qvswr0LBltAWEG4tg_XVE8uw6yxP60u4yF79Q

Westland City Elections

Westland has a Mayoral and City Council races on their ballot.

For Mayor, there are 2 candidates running:

- Tasha Green: <https://www.facebook.com/TashaGreenforWestlandMayor>
- Bill Wild (I): <https://www.facebook.com/WildforWestland>

For City Council there are 8 candidates running:

- Sarah Austin: <https://www.facebook.com/Sarah4Westland>
- David Cox: <https://www.facebook.com/DavidRCoxforCouncil>
- James Godbout (I): <https://www.facebook.com/JimGodboutWestlandCityCouncil>
- Debra Fowlkes: <https://www.facebook.com/DebraFowlkesforWestlandCityCouncil>
- Jim Hart (I): <https://www.facebook.com/JimHartforWestlandCityCouncil>
- Peter Herzberg (I): <https://www.facebook.com/VotePeterHerzberg>
- Antoinette Martin: <https://www.facebook.com/AntoinetteForWestland>
- Melissa Sampey: <https://www.facebook.com/IVoteMelissa>

Westland City Candidate Forums

The League of Women Voters hosted a Candidate Forum (held in June via Zoom and included all candidates during the Primary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJNK-PVvOw>

Hometown Life did profiles on all of the Candidate during the Primary

<https://www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/westland/2021/06/21/twelve-residents-running-westland-city-council/7654886002/>

<https://www.hometownlife.com/story/news/local/westland/2021/10/05/westland-mayor-election-2021-bill-wild-tasha-green-seek-position/5842970001/>
