

# ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

## ERIC JONES, Green

Occupation: Commercial Log Editor, Sinclair Broadcasting (FT)/Realty Edge, Licensed Real Estate Salesperson (PT)

### **Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Sustainable & Smart Development- I will work to curb sprawl, enhance public transportation and encourage the development of renewable energy.

An Economy That Works for Everyone- A living wage for all workers, increased support for worker owned and cooperative enterprises, and increased scrutiny of IDA tax breaks.

An End to Pay for Play Politics- Every citizen should have a voice, not just those who fund political campaigns.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture play a critical role in Erie County's quality of life. Festivals, plays, music and other cultural events bring people together. Museums and historical sites educate and entertain. Erie County's arts and cultural institutions enrich our community, making it a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

An investment in our arts and culture is an investment in the local economy. Our museums, theatres, galleries and other institutions make the region more attractive to outsiders looking to invest or relocate to WNY. I would like to have arts and culture included as part of the discussion whenever public funds are being spent on development projects. This includes Canalside as it enters its final development stages, and the proposed plans for the outer harbor.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

Millions of people from around the world visit Niagara Falls each year, and only a small percentage of them make their way south to Erie County. We must do a lot more to bring these visitors to our cultural and heritage destinations. This could include the development of tourist orientated transit between Niagara Falls and Buffalo, increased advertising, and partnerships with private tour groups.

**In what ways would you support young people’s access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

There are numerous studies that show the importance of arts education and how it correlates with improved academic achievement. Despite this, arts and music programs are often the first to face cuts in our schools. It’s important to have programs aimed at our youth to encourage their participation in the arts. I would like to see the County and our many non-profit cultural institutions work together to create arts programs for young people.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I would oppose any attempt to decrease funding, and I would work with the legislature to find additional funding for cultural organizations.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

This would go hand-in-hand with my desire to increase the amount of public participation in Erie County’s Government. I would welcome any opportunity to bring more voices into the decision making process.

**MARK POLONCARZ, Democratic, Working Families**

Occupation: Erie County Executive

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

- Ensure that all Erie County residents benefit from the economic resurgence we are experiencing.
- Promote sound budgeting practices to keep Erie County fiscally strong.
- Protect public safety by investing in infrastructure and emergency preparedness.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and cultural organizations not only provide cultural experiences, educational opportunity and entertainment, they are also an important economic force.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Here in Erie County, every dollar invested in arts and culture results in over nine dollars of economic activity. To that end I'm committed to continuing Erie County's investment in Arts and Cultural organization to reap that economic benefit.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

As the primary funder of Visit Buffalo Niagara, Erie County is a major promoter of cultural and heritage tourism. My administration has a track record of increasing support to arts and cultural organizations years over year and expanding coverage to over 60 organizations. Without County funding, many of these entities would be unable to promote themselves to tourists.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Beyond Erie County's continued investment in Arts and Cultural organizations, through our public art partnership with the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Erie County is providing area school children with thousands of 'Art Kits', to enhance art programs in area schools.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Year over year my administration has increased the total amount of arts and cultural funding.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I reinstated the Arts and Cultural Advisory board to give the arts community a voice in the funding process.

**RAY WALTER, Republican, Conservative, Independence**

Occupation: Assemblyman 146th Dist., Attorney at Magavern Magavern & Grimm

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

1. Bringing Economic Prosperity to ALL of Erie County
2. Stabilizing/Reducing Property Taxes
3. Fixing our crumbling infrastructure

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Art is the representation of a community's values, history, and people. President Lyndon Johnson said it best when he stated: "Art is a nation's most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves and to others the inner vision which guides us as a nation. And where there is no vision, the people perish." Erie County's deep reservoir of cultural resources is our region's calling card and our community's treasure.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Arts and Culture play a huge role in bringing people and their disposable income from outside of Erie County into Erie County. The revenue and attention generated from cultural tourism will help to fuel our regions rebirth.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

Foster a closer relationship between Visit Buffalo Niagara and our arts and cultural attractions. Dedicate the County's Occupancy tax to the VBN and our cultural organizations. Create a new committee made up of key members of the VBN and cultural organizations that will look for ways to drive people to Erie County.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Our schools play a crucial role in providing access to art and music to our children. Unfortunately the educational policies of our current Governor and those who support him have diverted resources away from these critical programs. I have fought hard in the state Assembly to restore funding to our schools in order to avoid these cuts. The County can do much more to support our schools and as County Executive I will seize the bully pulpit to fight against the over testing and corporate takeover of our school systems that steals resources away from art and music.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

At a minimum hold steady and I would look for ways to increase funding in order to make Erie County even more attractive to cultural tourism. I would continue to support smaller cultural organizations that enhance the quality of life for our residents. We also

need to simplify the process for cultural organizations to receive county funding and look at making it a multi-year application rather than annually.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

Providing dedicated funding to the cultural sector will be a central platform of my plans as County Executive. The Erie County Occupancy Tax generates millions of dollars that could be divided between the VBN and our cultural sector. With the growth in available hotel rooms in Erie County this source of revenue looks like it will be growing at an increasing rate for some time. The VBN and cultural sector working together synergistically will enhance that revenue.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

### **Read at The Public.**

Click here to review The Public's website where responses were originally posted.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 3RD DISTRICT**

### **ANTHONY BANEY, Green**

Occupation: General Laborer and Forklift Operator at Nutrablend Foods

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Public schools need to be fully funded. Music and Arts programs need to be expanded and the role of them need to be incorporated and implemented in daily curriculum.

Reform the ECIDA with "Clawback Reform". Development corporations should not receive money, if they are not held responsible to follow through with agreed projects.

Erie County's criminal justice system is unjust and unfair. I propose a complete reformation of the criminal justice system in Erie County primarily focusing on the full legalization of cannabis for adults over the age of 21. Minorities are disproportionately targeted.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts are a free way of expressing emotions, in which people usually hold inside their head. Culture represents ideas, actions, rituals, and traditions that are engrained in that society. Erie County has a healthy mix of urban, suburban, and rural cultural traditions. Art plays a huge role in promoting Erie County's industrial and modernized heritage. Especially in North Buffalo, Elmwood Village, and Allentown, where huge Art Festivals are held. People from all over flock to these festivals to purchase, and marvel at the ingenuity, creativity, and craftsmanship of all of the artists. Music in WNY is a huge part of everyone's lives, especially Music is Art.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

First off, annual events that are just starting off, that are not profiting need better access to public space in which they can expand. The Infringement Festival is a perfect example of a festival that needs better access to public space. Events that promote Buffalo businesses, as opposed to national and international corporations should also have more access to public spaces to better promote local businesses. We need more funding for arts and music programs in public schools, as these help stimulate activity in young people. I would defend and fight to expand budgets for arts and cultural organizations.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

People from around the country know Buffalo and Erie County for our amazing food. Erie County needs to highlight and promote local businesses as opposed to chain restaurants. Buffalo is also known for our colleges, thus Erie County needs to increase funding for Erie Community College. With ECC receiving more funds, more graduates will have the opportunity to develop the local arts and culture community. If music and art were to be better invested in, than we would see more people travel to Erie County.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Young people are full of ideas, energy, and motivation. Young people more access to space in which their ideas can grow and flourish. There are so many parks in Buffalo and Erie County that are beautiful. Young people should have more access to use these

spaces to express their ideas, and beliefs. Young people want a better sense of knowing their communities and to see them thrive. Erie County needs to highlight and promote events, and projects in which young people try to educate and reach out to the Erie County community. If adolescents had more opportunity to organize events, than the more experience they would have under their belt.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I would vote to increase operational funding for cultural organizations because they help facilitate the sustainability of arts and culture. Arts and culture help facilitate civic discourse in a healthy and beneficial way. Music and art help spread ideas, promote social well being, and can even encourage others to become civically engaged.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I would definitely support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector. Erie County should stay updated on projects and events that are struggling financially. Erie County should also continue funding for projects and events that are important to the Buffalo community. Investing in Arts, Music, and Cultural events is basic for a society.

**PETER SAVAGE, Democratic, Conservative, Working Families**

Occupation: Erie County Legislator, attorney

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

To continue to fight to make sure that our region's arts and cultural organizations (many of which I am very proud are located in my district) continue to receive the funding they deserve;

To continue to deliver critical resources needed for improvements to infrastructure, parks and other community assets in my district and Erie County;

To continue to be accessible and responsive to the needs of the constituents of the 3rd District.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture play a pivotal role in our community. In many ways they provide the foundation and serve as an anchor for Erie County. Whether through cultural tourism, economic development, or cultural heritage, our many arts and cultural organizations are regional, and in many cases national and international treasures, which breathe life into our economy.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Arts and culture play a critical role in plans for economic development and help to create critical mass helping to drive economic development in Erie County. In addition, the significant uptick in economic development activity in Erie County offers unique opportunities for public art projects and elements to be considered and included.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

By building off of the strength of our cultural and heritage assets. The cultural assets we are fortunate to have in Erie County are in many cases not only regional assets but national and international attractions. The historic nature of our neighborhoods and architecture not only serve as a sense of heritage pride, but offer a unique opportunity for tourism in Erie County.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Early access to art is essential to not only enriching the minds and creative skills of students and a future workforce but offer needed balance to educational curricula. I have been proud to work with partners in County government and the arts community to encourage participation by young people in the arts. By continuing to fund arts



organizations, we provide the public (and perhaps most importantly youth) with opportunity and access to some of the greatest assets in the world.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I was very proud to vote to increase cultural funding in last year's budget, and would be open to supporting similar measures in the future.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I would be open to the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 4TH DISTRICT**

### **KEVIN HARDWICK, Republican, Independence, Conservative**

**1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

- Safeguarding the health and welfare of our community;
- Pursuing policies that will result in the creation and retention of good paying jobs;
- Broadening the tax base and promoting intergovernmental cooperation in order to maintain low property tax rates.

**2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and cultural institutions are essential elements of our community. They help define who we are and are basic to our quality of life. Specifically, in the City of Buffalo, arts and cultural groups are helping the city transition from a manufacturing hub to a web of unique neighborhoods where people enjoy living and visiting.

**3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

The impact of arts and cultural institutions goes beyond the valuable effects of cultural tourism. In order for us to realize our goal of creating new good-paying jobs for our residents, we need to provide a climate conducive to attracting businesses, professionals and entrepreneurs. Maintaining a vibrant cultural community is an important aspect of these efforts.

**4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

As a legislator, it is my job to make sure that Visit Buffalo Niagara is given the resources it needs to accomplish its mission. They are the professionals when it comes to tourism, and I have a record of making sure they are equipped to do their job properly. My role is to oversee their work, not to micromanage it. With that said, we have a great story to tell here in Erie County, and cultural and heritage tourism is a great part of that story.

**5. In what ways would you support young people’s access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

I am not sure we would be well-served by county legislators meddling in the affairs of the public schools. Having said this, I strongly believe arts education is integral to quality elementary and secondary education and am supportive of it.

**6. Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I could support any of these options depending on a variety of budgetary factors.

**7. Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I would not oppose creation of such a committee. I am not, however, a huge fan of dedicated funding for anything. My concern is the so-called “fungibility” argument, where dollars from a dedicated source merely replace, rather than enhance funding.

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**CASSANDRA VALENTINO** did not respond to this survey.

## TODD POTTER, Democratic, Working Families

Occupation: Law Clerk pending admission to the bar, Grashow Long

### **Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Eliminate individual municipal IDA's to end the municipality vs. municipality for businesses.

Advocate and push for an ECC satellite campus in the Tonawandas or Grand Island to save the hundreds of thousands of dollars each municipality pays in chargebacks to other counties.

End partisanship, saving taxpayers' time and money wasted over party-line bickering.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

The role of arts and culture typically, is an attraction and amusement, serving as an integral part of the county's economic and tourism blueprint. The benefits are often immeasurable, but in addition to contributing to tourism and economic stimulus, it's also a great way to showcase and promote the talents and creativity of Western New Yorkers.

The arts and culture scene also strengthens the community by integrating diverse individuals behind a common interest – whether it be a show at the New Phoenix or a selfie with Sharkgirl.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

The arts and culture has historically been a wise public investment furthering the economic and social interests of a region similar to the Greater Buffalo Area. My time on the Board of Education in Ken-Ton has allowed me to watch young, talented individuals go from thriving on the high school stage to receiving standing ovations at Shakespeare in the Park. I would actively promote our youth's participation in the arts to further their interests, but also to residually benefit the local economy by continuing to fund these programs.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I would develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County by expanding it more evenly throughout the county. Each community in the county has its own cultural attraction – Clarence Hollow, Grand Island, Lancaster, the Tonawandas – but the City of Buffalo’s rich history seems to overshadow and overpower the rest of the county. I would like to see more investment, spread throughout the county to promote each municipality’s history and encourage local cultural events.

### **In what ways would you support young people’s access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Being a young person myself, I understand the need for steep student discounts to encourage access to the arts. Throughout my academic career, I have necessarily spent time in museums, theatres and the Historical Society for research. Discounted student admissions and memberships are necessary to allow access for research, study and appreciation for the creativity necessary to create art and culture and I would advocate for the county to fund the admissions for students to ensure affordability and accessibility.

### **Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Depending on the organization’s need, I like to think I would never vote to decrease reasonably necessary funding. I would rather more invest in operational funding for expansion outside the city limits and bring these public attractions to more people. Therefore, I would likely vote to, at a minimum, hold steady the operational funding with hopes of increasing it.

### **Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

Yes, being on the Ken-Ton Board of Education, I believe stakeholder input is important to give those potentially affected the opportunity to weigh in and know their voices are being heard. A committee would be beneficial to not only ensure the experts in the field

are having their voices heard but also to ensure full understanding of the funding available to organizations.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 5TH DISTRICT**

### **THOMAS LOUGHRAN, Democratic, Conservative, Working Families**

**1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

- Promote economic development
- Provide quality county services within our budget
- Maintain and improve our quality of life

**2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture is essential to our quality of life. Arts and culture contributes significantly to our overall economic development

**3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

A vibrant arts and culture community is an attraction in bringing outside visitors and investment to Erie County.

**4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I will work closely with our tourism and visitors bureau to continue highlighting our arts and cultural assets.

**5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

I will support the development of a relationship with school districts and Erie County to promote the arts.

**6. Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I have always supported funding for our arts and cultural community and I will continue funding at appropriate levels.

**7. Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

Yes, I will always vote in the interests of our arts and cultural community.

**GUY MERLETTE, Republican, Independence**

Occupation: Amherst Councilman; Alternative Information Systems, Inc- VP President  
Systems President

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Improving residents' quality of life by improving services in the community, promoting community assets and investing in our infrastructure.

Increasing accountability in county government and agencies to ensure that residents are being put first and limited resources are being utilized in the most effective way possible.

Ensuring that the cost and size of government is not only affordable, but functional. This will help control spending & reduce taxes for both residents and businesses.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and cultural attractions are critical aspects of the community and contribute significantly to the character of Erie County. They positively impact our quality of life and are critical to creating a vibrant culture, specifically in the downtown corridor.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Arts and culture play an important role in the economy of Erie County. I believe we must do all we can to leverage these assets, so that Erie County can better capitalize from cultural tourism. By properly promoting our cultural attractions and unique assets, we can more effectively drive investment in our neighborhoods and communities.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I would work closely with Visit Buffalo Niagara and local institutions. In addition to better promoting many of the smaller, lesser known attractions in the city of Buffalo, I believe that more can be done build of the success of our larger, urban venues in order to promote attractions and historical sites in suburban and rural areas.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

As liaison to the Youth and Recreation Department in the Town of Amherst, I fully realize the importance of creating more opportunities for the youth in our communities. I have also worked hard to expand youth programming the Town of Amherst over the last eight years. I believe that fostering creativity in our youth is critical to their personal growth and I would work directly with cultural institutions and our schools to help foster additional learning experiences for our children.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I would support increasing operational funding for cultural organizations if possible. I believe that this could be done by using a larger portion of bed tax revenue for tourism and cultural promotion. Tourism spending and cultural promotion, when done properly, can have an extremely high return on investment and a significant multiplier effect.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I would support this but believe that this responsibility could be handled by the current Community Enrichment Committee.

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LYNETTE BATT did not respond to this survey.

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WILLIAM WALSH did not respond to this survey.

## ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 6TH DISTRICT

### ED RATH, Republican, Conservative, Independence

Occupation: Erie County Legislator, attorney

#### **Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Economic Development/Job Creation

Lowering the tax burden on Erie County families

Investing in our infrastructure, parks and community organizations

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture are ways that some members of our society are able to talk to and inspire large numbers of our population through their work which is a stylized reflection of how the artist views some aspect of their world. In turn, the person who is viewing the art may find some personal connection with what the artist is trying to portray and in turn may be inspired themselves.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

I would like to encourage a stronger public-private movement that helps support the Arts but does not rely solely on the people's money to fund one individual's preferred method of expression.

#### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**



[No answer provided.]

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

The youth in our county need to have their own opportunity to discover what motivates them artistically and creatively. I would like to sponsor and support opportunities for our youth to experience art in a way so that they can find what really speaks to them. Sponsored days at the art museum for county students is a possibility or an increase in public art displays throughout the county, which have proven to be a huge success.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I believe over the past few years, cultural organizations have been properly funded. Though I think each budget is a unique discussion, and funding levels for cultural organizations are a part of that discussion.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I do not believe an additional committee is necessary to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector. County officials have a long and thorough conversation each year with those in the cultural community about access to funding, and I think the current process is appropriate and working.

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**RIYAM WANNAS** did not respond to this survey.

**ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 7TH DISTRICT**

**PATRICK BURKE, Democratic, Working Families,  
Conservative**

Occupation: Erie County Legislator

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Water Quality, Opportunities for everyone, broadband internet access.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

In many ways we are defined by our arts and culture. As a small city, we are incredibly fortunate to have the arts, culture and architecture that exist here.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

We are going through an economic renaissance in our community and one of the indicators of a strong economy is a thriving arts scene. We need to build on the already substantial cultural assets that are already here.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

By advocating for increased funding of cultural organizations county wide. There is a misconception that cultural organizations exist only in the city and that just isn't true. Graycliff and the Erie County Botanical Gardens are two examples of tremendous regional assets that exist outside of the city lines.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

I think the Locust Street Art Center is a great example of increasing access to young people. It's a place that my own children have frequented and enjoyed. Art and culture need to be accessible for everyone.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Increase. Our art and cultural organizations create a positive economic impact and add to the quality of life for our region.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

Possibly. Currently, we are able to discuss cultural funding in Community Enrichment.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 8TH DISTRICT**

**TED MORTON, Republican, Conservative, Independence, Working Families, Green, Reform**

Occupation: Erie County Legislator, financial advisor

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Lowering taxes, reducing spending and generating an environment for job creation

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture play a very important role in Erie County. Nobody can deny how lucky we are to have the local cultural treasures that we do. Numerous famous sites, thriving large and small organizations, and groups that are just starting to form, create such an amazing synergy. Our local arts attract tourists from across the country, supporting the resurgence of Buffalo.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Beyond what some of our world famous cultural organizations continue to offer, I think all cultural organizations play a vital role. We have seen how simple art projects can entirely transform a dilapidated building or neighborhood. It can breathe life into areas long forgotten. Arts can play both large and small roles in economic development, and projects of all sizes help us reach the ultimate goal of a booming economy.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I think we would have to talk with the professionals and experts in the community about their ideas and thoughts. I think the entire community should be having this

conversation. I anticipate there will be a lot of debate and sharing of ideas on how to move forward, but ultimately I trust as a group we can come up with a successful plan.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

I think we need to do everything we can to get children from throughout Erie County access to arts. The arts and cultural community often faces hurdles, such as teens and children who would rather play video games. We need to show them that art can be fun, and can challenge them in stimulating ways. The earlier we start this process the better. I think that is something we need to be better at.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

I think it's premature to answer that question until you see what the upcoming budget looks like.

Previously I have voted to increase cultural funding beyond the recommendations of the County Executive. But I believe each budget is its own entity and nothing should ever be concrete. I believe in funding the arts community appropriately, and the last few years I believe we have achieved that.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I believe we have a committee that currently accomplishes these goals known as the Erie Arts & Cultural Advisory Board. This group of individuals from throughout the private and public sector work very hard to make funding recommendation levels to county officials.

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DEBRA LIEGL did not respond to the survey.

# ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 9TH DISTRICT

## LYNNE DIXON, Independence, Conservative, Republican

Occupation: Erie County Legislator

### **Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Creating a better business climate. Less Taxes, smarter spending and economic development.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Erie County is blessed with myriad cultural institutions that enhance the quality of life for all of us. We also have internationally recognized attractions from our past that draw people from around the world to Erie County. These landmarks are a great opportunity for us to present ourselves to a world that might not often think of Buffalo as destination.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Cultural organizations are a key economic driver in WNY. They serve the residents of the county but also are large contributors to increased tourism. When tourists come to see what we have to offer, they stay in our hotels, eat at our restaurants and spend their dollars locally. This helps create new businesses and more importantly creates local jobs.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

We must continue to invest in our current assets, and look towards the future and new opportunities.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

I think we should encourage public-private partnerships to fund art and music programs in our schools.

We should try to increase student and parental consciousness of what the arts have to offer.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Over the last three years, the County Legislature has maintained a fairly consistent level of funding for the culturals. In 2015, we increased funding over the County Executive's recommendation. I believe the County Legislature has shown its commitment to the arts community.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I believe we already have an appropriate committee to discuss funding levels for the cultural sector. I do not support the idea of dedicated funding, and believe the current process is working.

**DAN HAWRYLCZAK, Democratic**

Occupation: Business Owner, Self Employed

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Economic development and growth.

Equity with regard to county government and its services.

Stewardship and development of our resources.

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts & Culture serve to: 1) Mark our past & anchor our community. Entities like the Botanical Gardens, Graycliff Estate, & Penn Dixie site, amongst others, help serve this purpose. 2) They provide us with a barometer of the current vigor of the community, as seen in Canalside, Buffalo Irish Center, & Larkinville. 3) They are a springboard to our future. Studios & galleries spur economic development in communities. Arts teach

children & adults to think in new & interesting ways. They play a major role in attracting & keeping talented and productive people for the area.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Arts and Culture must be integrated in any development plans that are put forth. We have seen, through the success of Canalside and Larkinville that when careful thought is given to such integration, the area being developed does not just become an area that has been developed, it becomes a destination which draws people throughout the day, the week, the month...the year. Unlike development of old, where buildings and infrastructure were built only to sit fallow during the evenings and on weekends, we are building communities which attract use throughout the day, every day.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

The first priority would be to support efforts which are currently under way, from the Steel Plant Museum to the South Buffalo Light House, from the Chopin Singing Society to the Friends of Harmony Barbershop Chorus. Secondly, Buffalo is a city of neighborhoods. We need to find the unique flavor and character of each area and work to promote art and culture that is consistent with its traditions. Finally, take a look at what is missing. What industries, traditions, and trades had a major effect upon our landscape? Find them, develop a plan, and honor them.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

Encourage the maintenance of the effective programs that are currently in place.

Support the identification of areas in need of further development and collaboration with organizations to create appropriate programs and identify funding.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Ideally, I would vote to increase operational funding for cultural organizations as they provide a high return on investment for the dollars that are spent.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I would be in support of the creation of such a body, provided that such a committee takes a realistic approach to viewing the budget, its funding sources, and the viability of the dedicated funding.

## **ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 10TH DISTRICT**

### **JOE LORIGO, Conservative, Republican, Independence**

Occupation: Erie County Legislator, attorney

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Commitment to economic development;

Reduce taxes;

Represent the needs and goals of my district and the people who I am tasked with representing;

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

Arts and culture in the community are a method that people can use to express themselves, their beliefs, and encourage public discussion, often of topics that are difficult to talk express in words alone. In Erie County, arts and culture are a way for members of our varied community to talk about their past individualistic identities and our collective experiences

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

Erie County, in particular the city of Buffalo, has had a long history of blending economic development with artistic creation. This is seen most often in the use of artistic elements



in architecture such as city and county hall, Niagara square, the Hotel Lafayette, and most of the converted homes along Delaware. Today, we have continued that trend in some of the adaptive reuse projects occurring across the county including the development along the water front in the Riverworks property and Canalside developments.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

[No answer provided.]

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

As an elected official I have already taken part in fostering the artistic and creative skills of our county's youth in assisting in the dispersal of art kits to thousands of our county's students. Further, I feel that public art efforts are a tremendous asset to our county and are helpful in inspiring the artistic creativity of the county's youth.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

At a time of economic growth the county legislature should be working to keep the costs of government as low as possible while leveraging public resources to encourage private investment in art and cultural initiatives.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I find the current legislative committee discussion to be an excellent method to discuss topics like funding for culturals. The committee process allows for an exceptionally diverse group to come together and craft policy for the entire region. I think the difficulty in forming a new committee, however, would be the selection of committee members in the community. If there are too many voices there is not direction and if there are too few voices the ultimate decision may leave out part of our community. Groups of people working together to benefit the community as a whole is the foundation of a solid democracy.

# ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE, 11TH DISTRICT

## JOHN MILLS, Republican, Conservative, Independence

Occupation: President, J Mills Distributing

### **Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Reducing government waste, lowering taxes, investing in infrastructure

### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Erie County?**

I believe art can make people think outside the box, expand their mind and go places they've never considered. In our community, art is everywhere, and I think it enhances the quality of life we experience.

### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Erie County?**

I think it can play an important role if implemented properly. You visit all the large metropolitan cities around the country, and they have a thriving art scene that plays an important role in their growth. This is something we can't ignore, and something we need to continue to consider going forward.

### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Erie County?**

I think we need to work with local agencies to help identify and spotlight these great assets to our community. We need a plan that works for everyone, both large organizations and small.

### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Erie County?**

This past year I was happy to combine my private sector experience as President of J Mills Distributing with my public service to help educate these children. We used J Mills Distributing trucks to ship thousands of art kits to children across the county donated by a private Albright Knox donor. These are the types of partnerships we need to continue

to pursue because they have a direct benefit to the children at a very low cost to the taxpayer.

**Would you vote to decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations if elected, and why?**

Last year we proposed increasing funding, and this year we will see what the budget looks like before making that decision. Each budget is unique and needs to be treated as such.

**Would you support the creation of a committee to discuss dedicated funding for the cultural sector?**

I think that the already existing Erie County Arts and Cultural Advisory Board is sufficient at this time. I don't believe an additional committee is necessary.

## **CITY OF BUFFALO, COMPTROLLER**

### **Read at The Public.**

Click here to review The Public's website where responses were originally posted.

### **MARK SCHROEDER, Democratic, Conservative, Working Families**

Occupation:

Buffalo City Comptroller

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Ensure the transparency and accessibility of the City of Buffalo's finances to all citizens. Perform audits that expose waste, fraud, or mismanagement in City government, with the goal of having a positive impact on the City's finances by maximizing revenue and limiting expenditures.

Managing the City's debts and investments with the goal of maximizing returns on investments and limiting interest costs.

What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?

Arts and culture enhance the quality of life of residents living in Buffalo, in addition to

acting as a draw for tourists, which bolsters the local economy. Arts and Culture help to educate, entertain, and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds and bring us together as a community.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

Ensuring that economic development initiatives include components for arts and culture accessible for the public. The popularity of Shark Girl highlights the need and desire for similar public art having a role in economic development projects, especially with upcoming development expected on the Outer Harbor and Buffalo River. Better marketing of Buffalo's arts, music, and architectural assets in efforts to attract tourism.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

Highlight and strengthen Buffalo's tremendous cultural heritage attractions (Albright-Knox, BPO, Colored Musicians Club, art and music festivals, historical sites, architecture) while fostering and encouraging additional cultural initiatives that embrace Buffalo's history and prominence as a destination for arts and culture.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Buffalo?**

I fully support efforts to strengthen and increase the role that arts and music have in a child's education. Arts and Music have been increasingly neglected in recent years when developing curriculum. This has had a negative impact on learning and achievement, and has denied students a well-rounded, comprehensive education.

**Will you fully enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

Yes.

**CITY OF BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL**

**Read at The Public.**

Click here to review The Public's website where responses were originally posted.

## BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL, ELLICOTT DISTRICT

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**DARIUS PRIDGEN** did not respond to the survey.

## BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL, FILLMORE DISTRICT

### **SAM HERBERT, Democrat**

#### **1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

- Work with block clubs, and senior citizen groups in identifying issues that directly impact their daily quality of life.
- The education of our children in Buffalo public schools, and at large.
- The infrastructure in Fillmore!

#### **2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

To expose to those the different Art's and cultures of others. Through food, arts, crafts, dance, music, wears, color's, and language. The recognition of others cultures and arts.

#### **3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

To work with all stakeholder's on identifying the lack of economic development in areas across the City of Buffalo. To improve on development by locating more cash/funding.

#### **4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

By exposing the history of Buffalo pass and it's rich culture such as including heritage tourism to come learn about the "Michigan Heritage Corridor in Buffalo N.Y. Telling the historical stories of African Americans, events and places. National Association of Black Storytellers – Western New York Tradition Keepers.

**5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Buffalo?**

Taking the art's and other cultures to public schools, churches, hospitals, block clubs, and Community Center's.

**6. If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

When I'm elected, 1stl will view all funding then decide.

**7. Will you fully enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

Yes and no. No only because I want to look at the whole picture first.

**DAVID FRAN CZYK** did not respond to the survey.

**JOSEPH MASCIA** did not respond to the survey.

**DAVID HOWARD** did not respond to the survey.

## **BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL, MASTEN DISTRICT**

**LAMONE GIBSON** did not respond to the survey.

**ULYSSES WINGO** did not respond to the survey.

**SHARON BELTON-COTTMAN** did not respond to the survey.

**MICHAEL WOOLFORD** did not respond to the survey.

## **BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL, NIAGARA DISTRICT**

**DAVID RIVERA, Democratic**

Occupation: Councilman

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

Improve Infrastructure

Increase transparency

Support funding of community organizations

**What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

Arts and culture play a vital role in creating creative space for our residents. Experimentation and innovation are what drive an economy, and the arts provide inspiration for that.

**What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

A strong arts and culture presence attracts investment and development.

**How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

I would support our institutions that promote and highlight our historic jewels.

**In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Buffalo?**

I have supported organizations that provide programming in our schools and summer programs. Additionally public art is vital to developing a safe, critical thinking space.

**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

I would increase funding and support the creations of a merit-based committee to recommend allocations.

**Will you fully enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

Yes. The re-establishment of the ordinance came on a project I was heavily involved in on Niagara Street where we exceeded one percent for public art.

## **BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL, NORTH DISTRICT**

### **JOE GOLOMBEK, Democratic, Conservative**

Occupation:

Incumbent

**Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

1. Fiscal Responsibility
2. Community Revitalization
3. Fight crime

(all three help make Buffalo a destination location)

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Buffalo?**

Arts and culture enhance the quality of life in Buffalo. Companies recruiting or seeking to expand look at the role of arts and culture in a community.

#### **What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Buffalo?**

I have worked closely with the arts and culture community in the North District to revitalize Amherst Street. I am the cofounder of the RiverOctoberfest in Black Rock and Riverside ... Arts and culture are a large part of making Buffalo a destination location.

#### **How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Buffalo?**

I believe the continuation of large and small arts events will continue to develop cultural heritage tourism in Buffalo.

#### **In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Buffalo?**

I support arts being taught in the Buffalo Public Schools. I also support festivals, such as the Elmwood Festival of the Arts (personally and financially) that include youth participation.



**If elected, will you decrease, hold steady, or increase operational funding for cultural organizations and establish a merit-based, peer review process for cultural funding allocations such as the Buffalo Arts Funding Advisory Committee?**

I will do my best to hold steady operational funding for cultural organizations. If the finances of the city continue to improve I would support raising funding.

**Will you fully enforce the One Percent for Public Art ordinance already on the books that requires all projects receiving city funding to allocate one percent of the total project to public art?**

I believe the ordinance needs to be looked at and tightened. I would be willing to promote legislation that does just that.

## **NIAGARA FALLS, MAYOR**

### **PAUL DYSTER, Democratic**

**1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

-Continue to create a seamless interface between the City and its waterfront, notably by removal of sections of the Robert Moses “Parkway,” and their replacement by actual parkland.

-Get more of the 8 million visitors who come to NF to stay longer and spend more money by exposing them to our region’s rich historical, cultural and natural resources.

-Leverage Niagara hydropower to create additional investment and jobs in the burgeoning renewable energy sector (e.g., solar), creating “Greentech” jobs to replace those lost in the late-20thCentury collapse of our region’s traditional heavy industries.

**2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?**

Tourism is a key industry cluster identified in our Regional Economic Development Plan. From Sharkgirl to the Albright-Knox, & the Sportsmen’s Tavern to the BPO, our rich cultural scene is important both in promoting our region to visitors, and in establishing our WNY identity. #LiveNF has been a rallying point in NF for progressive young people looking to make a change. As a founder and past president of the Niagara Arts & Cultural Center (theNACC.org) and past board member of Advancing Arts & Culture

Buffalo-Niagara, I have devoted my time and effort to promoting the arts, and advocating for arts, cultural & heritage tourism funding.

### **3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara Falls?**

I will continue to advocate for the NACC as our anchor institution in the City, assisting with capital projects like the theater restoration, as in the past I have helped secure funding for the roof restoration and access improvements. I will continue to promote the local music scene through events like the Niagara Falls Music & Art Festival and the Niagara Falls Blues Festival, which originated during my time in office. I will implement plans for a public art project at Centennial Circle, and seek to incorporate some public art component into all new infrastructure projects. Arts jobs are real jobs, economic development people!

### **4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**

I will continue projects to reverse the ill-effects of urban renewal, and restore public waterfront access through expansion of Olmsted parks, creating a more attractive aesthetic for the City. I will promote our new Underground Railroad Interpretive Center (opens in the spring), advocate for a new Tesla museum, and continue efforts to relocate, interpret and celebrate the iconic Old Stone Chimney. As a board member of the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation, I will ensure we promote our cultural and heritage assets as a key part of our strategy to expand visitor stays in our city & region.

### **5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Niagara Falls?**

I have promoted youth programming through the NACC, and promoted arts education in our local school system by supporting the efforts of progressive local arts teachers like Rob Lynch to actively engage students in projects like street murals that promote both arts literacy and civic pride. We are seeking to promote more activity by Young Audiences WNY in Niagara Falls, and through Global Spectrum brought Shakespeare vignettes to Old Falls Street. August 22nd, we had our annual "Dance of the Fireflies"

event, combining art, dance, storytelling, environmental awareness & children's literature.

**6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**

Top priority for casino revenues at first was the City's crumbling infrastructure; still a priority, but much progress has been made paving streets and renovating public buildings, from fire halls to ice rinks. The highest best use of casino revenues should always be to invest them in economic development projects that will grow the future tax base—since casino revenues in the long term are less predictable than property tax or even bed tax or sales tax revenues, and we need revenues to pay our workers who deliver vital services. Finally, direct investment in improved quality of life—e.g. parks & playgrounds—makes peoples' lives better.

**7. Would you support the creation of a merit-based application and review process for allocation of funding to cultural organizations in Niagara Falls?**

In NF, we already use an intensive participatory budgeting process to allocate Community Development funding, and are expanding it to include allocation of funds to parks projects starting next year. The largest single recurring arts & culture-related expenditure in the NF budget is a \$30k allocation to the NACC for provision of general arts & cultural programming & support; I will support its continuation. I will also support creation of a public art fund to be allocated through participatory budgeting, and legislation to require a public art component in all public & publicly-assisted private infrastructure projects.

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**GLENN CHOOLOKIAN** did not respond to this survey

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## **ROBERT PASCOAL, Republican**

**1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

It's hard to list the top three because each priority is interdependent on the other. If I had to say anything I would say my top priority would be to improve the quality of life.

Under that main heading I would have to save eliminating blight (in and of itself a detailed set of initiatives), aggressively seeking private partnerships in developing tourist attractions, white collar industry such as finance, insurance, and banking, and fulfilling the goals set out in the city's 2009 Comprehensive Plan which clearly includes investments in the arts with a theater by the gorge.

## **2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?**

The arts and culture, in all forms, art, music, dance, theater, poetry, all play a pivotal role in any civilized society. Its absence creates a vacuum in the soul of man. Niagara Falls is in desperate need of serious cultural venues. It is starving for quality exhibits and performances. They feed the imagination, keep the past alive, and they encourage and inspire future artists to perpetuate the circle.

## **3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara Falls?**

The role of arts and culture is crucial to bringing in well-heeled, educated professionals. One of the short-comings in Niagara Falls is the lack of quality exhibits and performances. The saying, "If you build it, they will come." was never a more appropriate phrase than for Niagara Falls. People come from Sanborn, Wheatfield, Lewiston, Youngstown, New Fane just to listen to local bands in the city's parks. Imagine how far they would come for a professional performance of the Nutcracker, a musical, or larger scale popular band. The Castelani Art Museum only scratches the surface. We need to encourage expansion of our local art. And let's not forget our rich history and the interest people have in experiencing it. And of the mixed and diverse groups of people who grew Niagara Falls to over 100,000 people...the Italians, the Poles, the Irish, and the African Americans from the deep south. When people come to experience the arts they often dine, shop, consider living near it.

## **4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**

I would reach out to our neighbors and form partnerships to take advantage of all the regions resources. This would include emphasis on ecological aspects, what nature offers and exploit the potential for adventure. Our area is rich in hunting and fishing featuring some of the largest fresh water lakes and rivers anywhere. Restoration and

preservation of historic buildings. And whenever new construction is the only solution to preserve the look and feel of the city's past.

**5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Niagara Falls?**

I love this one. I would piggy back off the notion of a business incubator only for creatives. People are at their most creative in their youth. I would like to create a space for them to congregate, where they would work on their specialties like writing, painting, graphic arts, web design, videography, film. I would see that grants were written and money found to fund advisors who would help these creatives find markets for their work, much like a business incubator.

**6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**

I have to be honest. A portion of this money must be spent on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan to revitalize the decrepit condition of the core of the city, "Because downtowns are the heart of a city and region— and having a healthy heart is essential to having a strong city and region." We can't hope to bring arts and culture into an area where people feel unsafe. But I also believe that we can walk and chew gum at the same time ...meaning we can work to create the synergistic partnerships needed to advance the arts in downtown Niagara Falls while working on improving the infrastructure mentioned. As partners see the city set the stage to welcome the arts then I we would take the next step and earmark money for those partnerships.

**7. Would you support the creation of a merit-based application and review process for allocation of funding to cultural organizations in Niagara Falls?**

Yes, I would support a merit-based application and review process for allocation of funding to cultural organizations. I believe in creating a budget, in advance, that organizations could plan on. I also believe that these merit based recipients need to know that they can count on funds for a set number of years to fully realize their goals. I believe that we need to look to long term results and that can't be done with the Sword of Damocles hanging over their head on a yearly basis. It takes time to build an institution.

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**JAMES SZWEDO** did not respond to this survey.

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**JOHN ACCARDO** did not respond to this survey.

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## NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL

### ALICIA LAIBLE, Democratic, Working Families

#### 1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:

-Work to adopt smart budgeting practices, carefully measuring service outcomes and expenses, to do more with less.

-Fight for improvements to our city's infrastructure, making sure that the condition of our roads, sidewalks and parks keep pace with new economic development and encourage tourism and investment.

-Promote communication between elected officials, the community and the people who affect the daily life in our city.

#### 2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?

The revitalization of any city on the cusp of a renaissance holds powerful roots within its arts and culture sectors. It is a means to connect citizens and further establish a sense of community. Whether it be music, dance, poetry, cinema or painting, it gives everyone an opportunity to let their ideas be communicated. The arts allow the Niagara Falls community an outlet, a way to become culturally diverse and positively responsive towards our environment. In Niagara Falls the arts have become a way for residents to show they are committed to community development and improvement.

#### 3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara Falls?

Niagara Falls has many gifted and dedicated artists ready to serve their community. I will advocate for local businesses to utilize their homegrown talent base for advertisement, artwork, music etc. which means more money invested back into the local economy. Art improves the aesthetics of a city and encourages tourists to venture out from the park to support family friendly restaurants, stores, and boutiques in areas like Main St. and Buffalo Ave. I would also advocate for opportunities to host film productions, which can be very lucrative for a community by not only generating excitement and press but capital as well.

#### **4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**

I believe the creation of an art, cultural and heritage commission would benefit not only those involved within these sectors but the community as well. By creating an assigned commission and board we could alleviate funding issues and generate a central location for all parties involved to better interconnect. A commission will allow events to be better advertised and ideas within each subdivision to grow by means of our community members as well as through tourists.

#### **5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Niagara Falls?**

Arts education in Niagara Falls has fallen behind, not at the hand of teachers but due to budgetary constraints. Many Art instructors no longer have a classroom and are working within a \$100 a year budget. The financial situation in Niagara Falls is dire and it is important for us to be conscious of where every penny is being allocated. However, we need to find a balance between being conservative and investing in our youth and thus our future.

#### **6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**

My first priority would be to allocate additional funds to fix and replace aging infrastructure. We have to ensure safe roads and functioning water lines to support efforts such as the Music and Arts Festival or future movie productions. Second, I would give priority to projects that are self-sustaining and demonstrate an ability for independent revenue growth without the need for continued public funding. Third, I

would use casino revenue to invest in community development initiatives that will provide long term economic growth and stability for the city.

**7. Would you support the creation of a merit-based application and review process for allocation of funding to cultural organizations in Niagara Falls?**

Yes. As noted we are in a difficult financial situation. We need to find a balance between taking care of our basic needs as a city, funding necessary services and continued economic development. We should review each request carefully and include community input for future projects.

## **EZRA SCOTT, Democratic, Working Families**

**1. Please list your top three priorities if elected:**

-Maximizing use of the buffalo billion and exploring all funding options to continue the economic development in our city.

-Investing in our city's infrastructure.

-Reform and enforce the housing codes that will protect our neighborhoods.

**2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?**

Arts and cultural activities help people think outside the box, challenge themselves by doing and listening to new things, and ultimately creating their own success and pushing our community forward. You see all of the positive growth in our region, and must say to some degree say that arts and culture contributed to it with all of the live concerts and festivals around WNY. Lately in Niagara Falls we've been seeing a growing interest in people to get involved and stay active in the community. Just stop out to a Pints for Progress or mark your calendar for any number of the festivals that take place in the city. The more we see people getting involved and taking in interest in the arts we will have a more connected and protected city.

**3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara Falls?**



If you take a look at any growing city, no doubt there is a thriving art and culture scene. Whether its live music, art, photography, or theatre, its these individuals that push the envelope and form the culture of a city. These people need a seat at the table. We've got a lot of good things happening around here, and we need to embrace it. Niagara Falls has so many talented people, the investment needs to continue to grow in youth programs and to provide opportunities for artists to do what they love and ensure we have a steady flow of newcomers.

#### **4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**

Anything that we do in Niagara Falls starts with the local people. I know I don't have the answers to everything, but the people that have invested years of their life to understanding the history and culture of our city probably have some good ideas to put forward. One option I can think of to help is get our city and its residents more connected to the process, we need to find them and support their ideas to enhance cultural and heritage tourism.

#### **5. In what ways would you support young people's access to the arts in order to foster the creative thinking skills needed to ensure a solid future workforce in Niagara Falls?**

As a teacher and a former athlete, I know the importance of young people staying active and being involved in their community. One of the major hubs we have in Niagara Falls, the NACC, does some really great things. I know many people that take music lessons, attend workshops, and concerts there. Maintaining funding to existing programs and creating new opportunities at the NACC, and to other organizations, is crucial to producing well-rounded individuals in our community.

#### **6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**

-Rebuilding our city streets, water lines, and addressing infrastructure needs

-Support economic development initiatives that will have long term benefits for entire city

-Utilizing a portion of this money as a participatory budgeting process where the community decides how to spend taxpayer dollars in their own neighborhoods.

**7. Would you support the creation of a merit-based application and review process for allocation of funding to cultural organizations in Niagara Falls?**

Absolutely. Ensuring that the cultural organizations are funded appropriately is a no brainer and providing additional funding should be tied to merit.

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**ROBERT ANDERSON** did not respond to this survey.

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**RICHARD SMITH** did not respond to this survey.

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