

## **2013 NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE SURVEY** **RESPONSES**

### **Questions:**

- 1. Please list your top three priorities if elected.**
- 2. What is the role of arts and culture in our community in general, and specifically in Niagara Falls?**
- 3. What is the role of arts and culture in your plans for economic development in Niagara County?**
- 4. How would you develop cultural and heritage tourism in Niagara Falls?**
- 5. What do you see as your role in improving education in Niagara Falls, and how does a quality arts education factor into your vision?**
- 6. Now that casino revenues have been reinstated, going forward what are your top three priorities for use of that money?**
- 7. How do you view Niagara Falls' role in regional projects and initiatives like the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council or "Buffalo Billion" projects?**

### **ROBERT J. ELDER**

#### **OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

1. a) Helping senior citizens with a program called H.O.M.E. (Help out modest elderly), which makes criminal offenders serve community service by helping out the senior citizens. Example: The Harsh Winters here in Western New York, no matter what age you are, your sidewalks must be shoveled or the city can fine you. That Senior wants to obey the law but can't. That Offender, That Community Service Worker goes and does the work for them at no cost to the city. b) The vacant homes here in Western New York. We have over 22 trade schools here in Western New York and if we can get these schools to work on these vacant homes to fix them up, we can sell them for revenue and the kids of the schools can get their hands on training so they can move on to the

working world, Two birds with one stone. c) Last but not least, cleanup of the City from crime to trash in the alleys.

2. The most important thing in my opinion is to never leave arts and culture behind. I think Niagara Falls should have a taste of culture every year.

3. All of Pine Avenue is called Little Italy. Flags from different nations are put up every year; I think we are doing good.

4. Same as answer for question #2. I think more people would come just for that event.

5. The future of our world falls on the younger generation and if we as adults do not teach them culture as we know it will be lost.

I think we should allow the younger generation to have space in the Niagara paper to express themselves. Example: Best Photo taken or Best Poem or to just say how they feel about the world today. Just because someone is young doesn't mean they don't have a vision.

6. Fixing the streets of Niagara Falls. Paying the bills of Niagara Falls. Putting money into the Fraud Department of Public Assistant. Finding out what the people of Niagara Falls needs and wants is where the money should go along with holding some of the money for a rainy day like Emergency Disasters.

7. I feel us, as a whole of Western New York should work together in any endeavor. The saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall."

## **SAMUEL F. FRUSCIONE**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

**CURRENT OCCUPATION: TEACHER CERTIFIED PRE-K, SOCIAL STUDIES 7-12**

1. Reducing and stabilizing tax rates; Reducing crime; Reducing blight; Improving city services.
2. Public schools immerse children from start with music arts, drama. Not for profits also play a role in maintaining and supporting the arts. Ethnic societies also exist to maintain various cultures throughout city.
3. I will continue to privately support arts and culture in Niagara Falls. Private support is essential for growth and development.
4. I have been promoting Italian culture and Black History via cable access television. The city should remove all "red tape" that hinders the development of cultural tourism. Furthermore, I currently operate the Falls Street Emporium. We display various historical artifacts and provide street musicians a venue to perform or retail their work.
5. As a public school teacher for 22 years, arts, music, and culture has been a major part of my instructional practices. I have provided extracurricular music lessons and history lessons my entire career.
6. Public safety; Demolitions and blight; City services; Tax rate stabilization.
7. Niagara Falls will play a major role due to its international appeal and draw. If Niagara grows WNY grows.

**KRISTEN M. GRANDINETTI**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

**CURRENT OCCUPATION: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCILMEMBER**

If elected: a) Continue rebuilding infrastructure. b) Create an atmosphere that is welcoming and affordable to all; including students, developers and families. c) To speak the truth to my constituents, stand up for what is best for the community and be available when needed to all of our citizens.

The role of arts and culture in our community is crucial. I teach in a school where a majority of the students live below the poverty level. It is unlikely that many of them get the proper exposure to arts and culture that will broaden their minds and teach them to be critical thinkers. It is an important outlet for emotional health and well-being. Too often the arts are the first thing to go when money gets tight. I believe that we as a community need to commit to arts and culture particularly when our schools are struggling. At any time and any age art and culture play an integral part in a person's well being. Whether it be music, sculpting, painting, paper, metal, photography, food or whatever...

In my community I make a strong effort to support the arts. Many of the arts here are brought to us through grass roots organizations such as the NACC. Unfortunately a lack of income and education often excludes art as a priority from many peoples' lives. But every person has a talent and everyone can appreciate some form of art.

Frankly, I leave heritage tourism to the experts like Tom Yots, Tom Lowe, and Paul Gromosiak. But I do support them when...and how I can.

Improving education in Niagara Falls is very important to me. The first thing is to make children feel safe and loved so that they can be free from anxiety and open to learning. The second is to trust them with the truth and allow them to make informed decisions.

I am personally deeply concerned that we do not properly educate our students about sex education particularly STDs and safe and healthy relationships. I am also concerned for GBLTQ community in my city. I worry for the students not getting, and I fear for their safety. A dear friend of mine struggled terribly and nearly lost his life. As we put more demands on our students I fear that arts and trades are taking a back seat. We preach about teaching to 8 different intelligences but ...and respecting different learning

styles and people as individuals but we are trying to put all of our beautiful circles into a square mold.

This is why it is incredibly important to support the arts. Our schools are weighed down by test scores or else no funding threats. Come and spend a week in a classroom and see what these kids deal with on a daily basis. And we want to eliminate or minimize the importance of arts and culture? Shame on us. We need to support any organization that will support the arts. How many sad songs have been written, how many paintings, sculptures and photographs have been an outlet for the vast array of emotions we as humans feel. Removing arts and culture denies us of who we are deep in our souls.

Casino Funds-The top three priorities for these funds are 1st restoring any funds that were used to help us through this crisis. Second to complete the paving and infrastructure projects that we began and could not finish without this money. And third...do what is best for public safety and restore some funding to outside entities who improve the quality of life for our citizens.

I view the Buffalo billion and the NYREDC as a very important and incredible opportunity for our community to participate in the renewal of Western New York. I am pleased and proud that our mayor participates in these to regional projects. I learned a little late in life that it is not wrong to ask for help and play on a team. No one can go it alone.

## **VINCE SANDONATO**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

**CURRENT OCCUPATION: LAW STUDENT**

1. a) Eliminate life time health benefits for elected officials. b) Reduce and eliminate the two tier tax system. c) Eliminate duplicated services and eliminate wasteful spending internally.

2. Arts and culture can play a significant role in the revitalization of Niagara Falls if properly used to our advantage, especially in the Main Street district.
3. I would encourage the Main Street area to grow into an Arts and Theater district that rivals Buffalo. Having so many people in and around Niagara Falls, there is no reason we lack a powerful artisan community.
4. I would love for the NAAC to move near the Rapids Theater. I would like to attract similar minded businesses and attractions to locate there and that would trigger the growth of a desperate area. Having a successful arts and music festival this year on Main Street only proves that point. With the Rapids putting on headlining concerts; a person could view an art gallery before the show, have dinner at a quaint restaurant, or enjoy a drink after the show. All of this should be in walking distance.
5. Unfortunately as a city council member I cannot affect education, that's school board. However, I can improve the quality of life, work to bring in long term stable jobs, and embrace the growth of our city. While i do not support pumping money into a poor structure like the old NFHS, I do support the NAAC moving into a friendlier building so that they can be self sufficient and closer to an arts and culture district like Main Street. This would be a win-win for everyone.
6. a) Relieve tax payers from high taxes; b) Creatively encourage home and business owners to develop/maintain their property so that we build Niagara Falls neighborhoods from the inside out; c) Establish a city government that produces a surplus rather than a deficit, which enables the government to efficiently support the community.
7. It's essential that we are a part of the conversation and its to our benefit to promote regionalism and growth. As a tourist city, marketing ourselves as a regional hub can keep visitors here longer. This generates more bed tax for longer stays and stimulates growth citywide. Also it is our job to encourage sustaining industries to build in Niagara Falls so that we can give residents jobs and wages to support a family.

**ANDREW TOUMA**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

TOUMA DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY.

**RUSSELL VESCI**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

VESCI DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY.

**CHARLES WALKER**

**OFFICE SOUGHT: NIAGARA FALLS CITY COUNCIL**

**CURRENT OCCUPATION: MANAGER COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
NIAGARA FALLS MEMORIAL**

1. A.) 5 YEAR PLAN FOR CASINO DOLLARS REBUILDING NIEGHBORHOODS 1 BLOCK AT A TIME (STREETS, SIDEWALKS, TREES,INFRASTRUTURE, PUBLIC SAFETY). B.) BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN RESIDENCE AND CITY HALL, TO CATCH ONE ANOTHERS VISION FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY IN THE CITY. C.) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WHICH IN TURN LEADS TO JOBS.

2. FIRST LET ME SAY NOT WHAT IT COULD BE OR SHOULD BE, BUT IN GENERAL EDUCATION, ENTERTAINMENT, ENJOYMENT AND ARTS ALSO HAVE A PURPOSE AND IMPACT ON A PERSON'S HEALTH. ART TELLS A STORY AND IN NIAGARA FALLS WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF TELLING OUR STORY. SO I BELIEVE IT CAN PLAY A MUCH BIGGER ROLE IN THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS.

3. MAJOR ROLE! WITH THE WORK I HAVE DONE WITH THE NIAGARA FALLS UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMMISSION AND THE WORK OF THE FEDERAL COMMISSION, NIAGARA FALLS AND THE REST OF NIAGARA COUNTY CAN MOVE INTO A NEW ERA OF ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WITH THE FOCUS ON TOURISM GENERALLY AND HERITAGE TOURISM SPECIFICALLY. DOCUMENTING AND INTERPRETING THE COMMUNITY'S HISTORY RELATIVE TO THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, ABOLITIONIST, THEIR MOVEMENT, AND OTHER REFORM RELATED ACTIVITIES.

4. FIRST INTRODUCE PEOPLE TO THE HISTORY HERE, IN PARTICULAR THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. I HAVE HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHERS ABOUT DOING A ROAD TO FREEDOM REUNION IN 2014. INVITE DEVELOPERS AND PAST RESIDENCE WHO HAVE MOVED AWAY, EVERYBODY HOME FOR A WEEKEND IN WHICH WE PROMOTE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE HISTORY AROUND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD. WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW RAIL STATION AT THE CROSSING. OTHERS MAY FIND THIS AS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR INVESTMENT.

5. MY ROLE WOULD BE SIMILAR TO THE ROLE I HAVE PLAYED IN THE PAST. I HAVE BEEN A SUPPORTER, A CHEERLEADER AND ADVOCATE



FOR ARTS AND MUSIC IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM, AND COMMUNITY PARTICULARLY THE NACC.

6. 1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2. NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION 3. PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

7. I BELIEVE NIAGARA FALLS SHOULD PLAY A MAJOR ROLE. WE HAVE THE FALLS, VISITORS COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO VIEW THE FALLS. THE NAME NIAGARA FALLS KNOWN ALL OVER THE WORLD, MORE ATTRACTIONS MORE MONEY THEY LEAVE BEHIND (TAX BASE GROWS, JOBS CREATED). OUR WATER WAYS, KNOWN FOR GREAT FISHING, WE HAVE THE POWER PLANT (LOW COST POWER) WE HAVE A GREAT LABOR FORCE. I BELIEVE IT'S TIME NIAGARA FALLS BECAME THE ENGINE AND THE DRIVING FORCE FOR ECONOMIC AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN NEW YORK.